



# *Advent Devotional*

2021

GLORIA DEI LUTHERAN CHURCH



# I BELONG TO JESUS

*Advent Devotional* from  
Gloria Dei Lutheran Church 2021

Written by  
Pastor Joe Meyer



**Sunday November 28th**  
**Read Galatians 4:4-6**  
*“At Just the Right Time”*

One of the things that’s often said about God is “His timing is perfect!” In other words, God is never early, God is never late, He’s always bringing an answer, intervening, showing up, at just the right time. When we have a need that we believe must be met **now**, the Lord often brings the solution two weeks later! But amazingly, when we see God’s answer coupled with God’s timing, we realize that two weeks later was much better than...**now**! Often we’re frustrated with God and begging Him to answer immediately, but He answers in His time-frame and with His purpose in mind and we then, step back and say “God clearly knows what He is doing!” Similarly, God’s People waited and waited for the Messiah to come. They worried profusely and fretted immensely and rung their hands together as they prayed and prayed and prayed for the Lord to send the Messiah but it seemed to take forever! You can imagine their desperation when centuries went by and there was no answer to their asking and no Messiah in their midst. Like we do sometimes, when they prayed and prayed they likely also wondered if God had forgotten all about them. But you and I both know that He never has forgotten us and never will. We’re so funny about this “God-stuff”. We think that God is like Santa Claus and so we ask Him for what we need and we expect that He will fill our order and get it on the Amazon truck for “next day” delivery. Of course, God may bring the answer the next day, but He may not. Either way, even if God takes His time and does it His way, we know that He has never forgotten us and He never will. And in the case of the Messiah, Jesus the Christ our Lord, we know now that God knew exactly when to answer the prayers...God knew exactly

when Jesus needed to come! And so Paul wrote those famous words “*When the fullness of time had come...*” but “*the fullness of time*”? What does “*the fullness of time*” mean? Very simply put, it’s a reminder that the Lord had a plan and a purpose and indeed, He sent His Son for us at just the right moment in history, when all things were aligned by our Lord for the Gospel to go forward with the greatest of efficacy. At Christmas we remember, God sent His Son Jesus at just the right time!

*How would you explain this passage to someone else?*

*What amazes you by these words?*

*What questions does the passage raise?*

*Write out a prayer based on the truth of this passage of Scripture:*

**Monday November 29th**

***Re-read Galatians 4:4-6 (focus especially on verse five)***

***“With Just the Right Purpose”***

Many years ago, Pastor Rick Warren wrote the book “The Purpose Driven Life.” It was a monstrous-best-seller because people were (and people remain) hungry to know that their lives have a plan and a purpose and they aren’t just aimlessly floating through. We human beings often feel as though we’re drifting, just getting up...going to work...coming home...going to bed...and then hitting the “repeat button” day after, day after, day after...monotonous day. We want to have a plan and purpose for our lives and we want a plan and a purpose from God that’s bigger than hitting the “repeat button” over and over again! So Pastor Warren’s book struck a chord. But there’s something implicit and tucked deep into in Rick’s book that needs to be pushed up front in our hearts and minds as we consider the purpose of our lives. You see, the first book Pastor Warren should have written is not “The Purpose Driven Life” but “The Purpose Driven...God”! God is a God of purpose and a God of plans and a God of forethought! And that’s vitally important to understand because as Paul reminds us in Galatians 4:5, God’s purpose...is you! God’s purpose in sending Jesus “at just the right time” was you! He sent Jesus with purpose and forethought to “redeem” us as Paul writes. It’s best understood as Jesus came to “buy us back”, and He bought us back from our enslavement to sin and death and the power of the devil! God’s purpose in coming to earth was to live with you now and have you to live with Him forever! In other words, God had “just the right purpose” in mind for you...because you were His purpose...and through Jesus and faith in Him, He then becomes your purpose too!

*How would you explain this passage to someone else?*

*What amazes you by these words?*

*What questions does the passage raise?*

*Write out a prayer based on the truth of this passage of Scripture:*

**Tuesday November 30th**

***Re-read Galatians 4:4-6 (focus especially on verse six)***

***“With Just the Right Result”***

If someone has a plan and a purpose, we presume they do so in order to gain a result that is in line with their plan and purpose. We presume there's a desired result that all the planning and purpose are intended to bring about. In verse five of Galatians chapter four we're reminded that Jesus' plan and purpose to come into our world was done with a result in mind and that result was to “redeem” us as Paul writes it there. The term Paul uses leads us to define “redeem” as being “bought back from our slavery” and that slavery was to our sin. We who struggle against the effects of our sinful human nature understand all too well why Jesus had to do that very thing, why we had to be redeemed. If you've ever fought back against your “sin-nature” as we often call it, you realize that it is a fight and a fight to the finish...but a fight that feels more like slavery to be sure. You'll never be free from your sinful human nature, at least not until your death or the Second Coming when the book of the Revelation says “the old order of things has passed away”...the old order of things being our struggle against sin and death. But while we'll always struggle, Paul reminds us that we're already set free in Jesus and not just set free from enslavement to sin and death but that we've been given a brand new identity, one that is far better than slave! In Jesus we've gone from being a “slave to sin” and instead are now, through Christ, called a “child of God”! Paul writes that Jesus came into our world “...to redeem...so that we might receive adoption as sons. And because you are sons, God has sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying, “Abba! Father!” What an amazing truth...we've been taken from enslaved to set free, and better yet, from slave to “son” (daughter), and all of that because of the Son of God who came into our world with that as His aim, His plan, His purpose.

(Galatians 4:5,6). As you consider the “why” of Christmas, the answer is really quite simple...the “why” of Christmas is y-o-u. He came with you on His mind and He came to claim you fulfilling His words spoken in Isaiah 43 “*you are mine!*” And so He has...you are a child of God and so we can all agree, that’s just the right result!

*How would you explain this passage to someone else?*

*What amazes you by these words?*

*What questions does the passage raise?*

*Write out a prayer based on the truth of this passage of Scripture:*

**Wednesday December 1st**

**Read Luke 2:1-7**

***“A Place in History”***

When we come to Luke chapter two we come to what is likely one of the most loved and more well-known segments of the Bible. Goodness sakes, Linus from “A Charlie Brown Christmas” first read Luke chapter two for us in prime-time way back on December 9th of 1965. Amazingly then, this much loved cartoon and the reading of Luke two has played repeatedly on multiple channels and DVD players for 56 years now! And yet, in spite all of the modern displays and readings of this passage, we’re reminded that this story is imbedded in history, embedded in ancient history, with a ruler named “Caesar Augustus” and one of his minions named “Quirinius”. But you do have to ask, why did God preserve this “place in history” information for us? Why did God give us this accounting of the rulers of the day and of a census commanded by the back-then leader of the world? What does it even matter to the overall Christ-story? The Lord did so to remind us that Jesus isn’t a fictional character or fairytale figure, but Jesus came to us and did so in a real historical setting with real historical figures. The Lord Jesus genuinely came into our world and it is an indisputable fact! Your faith is indeed faith, but your faith is also imbedded in fact. Two-thousand years ago...God’s plan of salvation was fulfilled as the Lord God Almighty Himself made His appearance and took His place in the history of our world...and He did so for us...He did so for you. He stepped into our history so that you could step into “His-Story” now, and live in “His-story” forever in heaven. Indeed we walk by faith and not by sight, but we walk by faith based on sight...based in historical fact...based on a place in history!

*How would you explain this passage to someone else?*

*What amazes you by these words?*

*What questions does the passage raise?*

*Write out a prayer based on the truth of this passage of Scripture:*

**Thursday December 2nd**

***Re-read Luke 2:1-7***

***“What a Miracle!”***

Imagine for a moment...your daughter comes home and announces “*Mom and dad! Guess what? I’m pregnant! But please don’t get mad cuz it’s not what you think! The Holy Spirit overshadowed me and gave me a baby!*” You know exactly what you’d think...this ain’t “holy”! This girl’s lyin’...she made a mistake and is trying to cover it up with a “miraculous tale” and is furthermore and worse yet, blaming God for her misstep. Of course that likely happened in the life of Mary. Imagine... Mary the Mother of our Lord telling that very same story to her parents... to everyone. Everyone knew Mary and Joseph weren’t yet married, only betrothed. While betrothal was far more binding than our “engaged”, she was nonetheless not yet married to our Lord’s earthly father, the man named Joseph. So there’s no way she should have been in the family way and not being a virgin in her world and her day was a death sentence. Unless...the Holy Spirit indeed did overshadow her. Unless...it was indeed a miracle. And indeed...it was! Isaiah 7:14 would prophesy the miracle that Mary was experiencing: “*Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign. Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel.*” (Isaiah 7:14). A virgin girl, no husband, no inappropriate behavior, no accidental pregnancy...instead, a miraculous pregnancy given by the Lord’s will and through the Lord’s Holy Spirit. But wait, there’s more! That is indeed a miracle...but it’s not the greatest miracle here. The virgin will be with child. The virgin will become pregnant with a Son. But the true miracle here is that she’ll be pregnant with God’s Son. Said more plainly? God Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth, chose to place Himself in the womb of a virgin girl! What a miracle! God within Mary...and...God within us! What a miracle indeed!

*How would you explain this passage to someone else?*

*What amazes you by these words?*

*What questions does the passage raise?*

*Write out a prayer based on the truth of this passage of Scripture:*

**Friday December 3rd**

**Read Luke 2:8-14**

***“Amazing Theatre!”***

If you've ever been to New York City and seen the Rockettes' Christmas Show, you know that no matter what their theme is, every year ends the same. Every year that show ends with Luke chapter two being projected on a see-through-netted-screen in front of the 6,015 seat audience. The Christmas story from God's Word scrolls up for all to see and hear but as it does, a massive "living nativity" that is stunningly cinematic, is happening in the background behind the screen. This Hollywood style "Christmas Pageant" is nothing short of off the charts, complete with dozens of live animals; a multiplicity of shepherds; glowing angel hosts; and of course, the Holy Family with Mary and Joseph and elevated and at the center of it all! With massively-brilliant spotlights illuminating the manger above everything else, the Lord Jesus is worshipped in grand pomp and circumstance by the three wise men prostrating themselves before Him. Robin and I saw this show seventeen years ago and yet, as I describe it for you, I still get chills thinking about that production! It's truly amazing! Must admit, I couldn't believe my eyes that the "Hollywood-crowd" would produce such amazing theatre around the birth of the Lord Jesus Christ! And yet, as cinematic and as stunning as this production was, it absolutely pales in comparison to what actually happened that night. Indeed, there were dozens of live animals; a multiplicity of shepherds; glowing angel hosts; and of course, the Holy Family with Mary and Joseph and yet, at the center of it all, in a humble stable tucked into a feed-trough called a manger, was the King of kings and Lord of lords, the "little" Lord Jesus asleep on the hay (there were no wise men...they came later). The Rockettes do an amazing job of getting at the magnitude of the night, but truth is, nothing they could do could capture the amazing

theatre that happened two-thousand years ago in Bethlehem of Judea. That night...God lit up the night with the light of the world, the Lord and Savior Jesus...sent for me, sent for you, so that some day we might see the most amazing “theatre” of all...eternity in God’s presence, eternity in heaven itself!

*How would you explain this passage to someone else?*

*What amazes you by these words?*

*What questions does the passage raise?*

*Write out a prayer based on the truth of this passage of Scripture:*

**Saturday December 4th**

***Re-read Luke 2:8-14***

***“Gulp...With Whom He is...Pleased?”***

There is a label put on some people, that those who have it given to them, do their level best to live it down. The label? “People pleasers”. People pleasers are those who aren’t really looking to gain anything physical or tangible by what they do, they simply want to be recognized by the person or people they are seeking to please. People pleasers are hoping for scraps of dignity and morsels of respect to be tossed their way as they do whatever they can to...well...to please other people! Clearly, when it comes to our interpersonal relationships, there are people who fall into the category “people pleasers” and those that do not; people who crave and care that other people are pleased with them and those who couldn’t care less. But when it comes to our relationship to God, all of us should care, must care, about Him being pleased with us. If He’s pleased with you, you’re in...if He’s not pleased with you...you’re out...and I think you understand what I mean. I think you’d also agree then, that all of us should therefore deeply care what He thinks of us. Said according to verse fourteen of Luke two, if He’s pleased there’s “peace” in your life, if He’s not pleased, the opposite is coming your way. So how in the world do you please God? How in the world do you please the seemingly un-please-able God? That indeed is what Christmas and Christianity is all about...pleasing God that is. But it’s not about you pleasing God but about God being pleased with you as Luke records it here. The difference lies in remembering that the only way that God can be pleased with you; the only way that could happen, is if Jesus came into this world to please God and do so, for you. And so He did. Through Jesus and His work on your behalf, and faith in Him and baptism into His name, God is pleased with you. As you trust in His finished work done for you, God is pleased

with you on account of Christ. In fact, Luke records that the angels sang “*Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace among those with whom he is pleased!*” Indeed, because Jesus came that first Christmas and through faith in Him and His life, death and resurrection for us, God is pleased with us and we can join the angels singing “*Glory to God in the highest*” both now, and forevermore!

*How would you explain this passage to someone else?*

*What amazes you by these words?*

*What questions does the passage raise?*

*Write out a prayer based on the truth of this passage of Scripture:*

## **Sunday December 5th**

### **Read Luke 2:15-20**

#### ***“Faith and Action”***

What an amazing night that must've been on the hills of Bethlehem so long ago! I've been to those hills several times as I've made the trek with many Christians into the Holy Land. I will tell you that it is an amazing moment, seeing that place for myself, seeing it at night, and considering what it must've been like when the angels of God lit up the night sky with the glory of God Himself! You and I both know that the shepherds were not only blown away and afraid in the moment, after all, they were encountering heavenly beings that almost always say *“Don't be afraid!”* But more than that, they were moved deeply by the message of the Christ-Child which was proclaimed to them that night! Notice what the message of the Christ-Child did in their lives. Notice that they didn't go back to normal life. Notice that they didn't just lay down for the night and get a good night's sleep. No, they went into Bethlehem proper to see this thing that the angels had proclaimed to them. They personally went to witness and maybe to worship the new born King! And yet...there's something else they did. They didn't just witness and worship and leave it at that, but Luke tells us this: *“And when they saw it, they made known the saying that had been told them concerning this child. And all who heard it wondered at what the shepherds told them.”* Luke 2:17,18. Their new found faith in the Messiah of God drove them to tell others what they knew to be true. Faith and action...they always go hand-in-hand. How could they not? And so it is with us, as we, through faith, worship the new born King, we are also moved, through faith, to tell others of what we've seen and heard that they, as Luke writes it, might “wonder” at what God has done. In other words, our faith moves us to action that others might find faith and...be moved to action too!

*How would you explain this passage to someone else?*

*What amazes you by these words?*

*What questions does the passage raise?*

*Write out a prayer based on the truth of this passage of Scripture:*

**Monday December 6th**

***Re-read Luke 2:15-20***

***“Pondering? Treasuring?”***

One of the more beautiful and poignant sentences in the narrative of Jesus' birth is found in this segment of Luke. It's an amazingly tender sounding passage about the Lord's mother. Luke writes this about Mary: *“Mary treasured up all these things, pondering them in her heart”* Luke 2:19. Every time I read those words I also “ponder” them myself. Questions come to mind like: What was Mary “pondering”? What was she “treasuring” for that matter? But when I think about that, I also wonder what she “pondered” that she didn't already know? Let's not forget that Mary did hear directly from the Angel Gabriel himself prior to the birth of Jesus as he spoke these words: *“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”* Luke 1:31-33. So Mary had a pretty good inkling of who the Christ-Child was as the Davidic Messiah sent by God. She would likely have been fully aware of His status as Messiah, particularly after the shepherds came to the Holy Family and told them about the brilliance of the angels and heavenly announcement. But while she understood some of what it meant to be “The bearer of God” and what it meant that Jesus was the Messiah, it's clear that she didn't know nor understand it all. Mary would actually struggle with Jesus' mission on earth. Mary would even doubt Jesus' mission on earth (see Mark 3:21). What was she pondering then? Maybe that was it? Maybe she was pondering what the future would bring to her and her Child? What would she experience as she raised the Messiah? What was the extent of His mission on earth and what would that mission bring

her way? You can imagine where her thoughts led her...right? Especially knowing just the little bit that she knew? Of course nothing would prepare her for both the pain and the joy she would experience with this Baby Boy. We remember that, as it is often said, this little one in her arms came to “exchange the wood of the manger for the wood of the cross”. And when we think of this quiet and majestic Christmas scene...we should be pondering that too...pondering this Baby Boy’s work at the cross and the grave. As we do, we can join Mary then, in “treasuring” these things in our hearts as well!

*How would you explain this passage to someone else?*

*What amazes you by these words?*

*What questions does the passage raise?*

*Write out a prayer based on the truth of this passage of Scripture:*

**Tuesday December 7th**  
**Read Colossians 1:15-20**  
***“Created by Him”***

Imagine for a moment looking down on the manger and seeing the newborn baby Jesus. Wouldn't it have been an amazing sight? Wouldn't it have blown your mind? Well, actually, maybe not. This baby born to this insignificant couple is not really all that amazing at all. Don't get me wrong, the miracle of conception and birth are truly that, amazing miracles. Remember it's not biology...it's theology...God creates us by placing us in our mother's wombs! God creates us, we're not a product of chance or happenstance but a product of the hand of God...purposeful and intentional...brought into this world by God's plan! And so, if you looked at Jesus in the manger that way, I'm all in. But truth is, He would have looked just like any ordinary new born lying there in the feed trough in the stable. A little wrinkly. A little "birth bruised". A little, tiny, no big deal new born baby Boy. No real "Wow!" about this at all. Oh sure, cooing a bit...probably crying a bit...even if the Christmas Carol does say "no crying He makes". Whatever, He cried! However, therein lies the amazing truth of the manger scene. That little baby, cooing and crying in the manger, using His voice to hail His mother's attention, is the voice of the Creator God that puts us in our mother's wombs. What? This frail baby-voice is the voice that said *"Let there be light"* and there was light? Yep. This "frail baby" is the God of the universe who spoke and slung this universe into being. This "frail baby" is, as Paul writes it here, "...*the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation. For by him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things were created through him and for him.*" *Colossians 1:15,16*. Created by Him? Yes. Created by the baby in the manger? Yes. Indeed, all things have been

and will be created by this baby born in Bethlehem's Stable! So as you look into the feed-trough known as a manger, you'd see a wrinkly, red, new born Baby...but you'd also see the All-Powerful God of the Universe, the God who created it all, including you and me.

*How would you explain this passage to someone else?*

*What amazes you by these words?*

*What questions does the passage raise?*

*Write out a prayer based on the truth of this passage of Scripture:*

**Wednesday December 8th**  
***Re-read Colossians 1:15-20***  
***“What’s He Doing Here?”***

Several years ago, after a Christmas Eve service, I had a member very angry at me. Yeah, sad to say, sometimes we Pastors get an ear-full, and even sadder, sometimes on Christmas Eve. This member was very upset at me for mentioning the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus on Christmas Eve. People get upset about the oddest things, right? In fairness, she felt that Christmas Eve should only be about the birth of Jesus. She felt very strongly that we should hear about the angels, the shepherds, the stable, the animals, the Holy Family and the wondrous truth of God born in a manger...but only that! And I completely understand her sentiment and ensuing concern. I too want to keep the whole Christ-story in segments as we in the Church, through the first half of the Church-year, talk about the life of Christ in sequential order. The problem with that? You can't talk about the manger without talking about the cross and the grave. You can't have Bethlehem without Jerusalem, you can't have manger without *“My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?”* The two things go hand in hand. Said differently, the manger makes no sense without the Cross and the Grave. Let me put it this way: Once you determine that the Creator God placed Himself in Mary's womb and allowed her to give birth to Him in the humble digs, you have to ask *“Why?”* Why did God come to earth? What is He doing here? Why did God walk this planet in the person of Jesus for three and a half decades? Paul answers that for us at the end of our text saying: *“For in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell, and through him to reconcile to Himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, making peace by the blood of His cross.” Colossians 1:19,20.* You see, when you simply have Bethlehem's story and not Jerusalem's story, you miss the fact that Jesus was in the manger to go to the Cross for

you! The beauty of the Christmas Story is that it's not just about His birth, but about your re-birth. Said another way, Jesus was born in Bethlehem's stable so that you and I could be born-again! What's He doing here? He's reconciling us...redeeming us...making us His own! So, regardless of any push-back I might get, I'll just keep on preaching the cross and the grave on Christmas because every time I do, we are reminded of why He was here and what God has done for us...and that's what Christmas is all about!

*How would you explain this passage to someone else?*

*What amazes you by these words?*

*What questions does the passage raise?*

*Write out a prayer based on the truth of this passage of Scripture:*

**Thursday December 9th**

**Read Matthew 1:18-25**

***“Two Witnesses?”***

Earlier in our devotional trek we talked about Mary’s parents being taken back, being upset and downright saddened by the news that she was pregnant. We don’t have to live in their day and time to understand but it doesn’t hurt to understand more about their day and time. To be sure pregnancy would have been an issue for Mary and her family as well. Her reputation would have been ruined and she could have been stoned to death for adultery. All of that is important and needs to be considered. But as we come to Matthew Chapter One we have one other consideration about this pregnancy and it’s actually not Mary but Joseph. What about Mary’s betrothed..what about Mary’s husband to be? What’s Joseph’s take on all this? How do you think Joseph would have felt had he heard the “story” that Mary came up with about the Holy Spirit supposedly “overshadowing” her? He would have been devastated. He would have known that he was not the father, but of course, the community would have presumed he was the father. Beyond the scorn he would have felt, what about the hurt, the pain, the heartbreak of having the woman you love and intend to spend your life with becoming a presumed adulteress. We get it. We understand what he would be feeling. And God knew that’s what Joseph would have felt...and what he might do...and so God intervened in a dream before it could get that far by calming Joseph’s fears, calming Joseph period. But in doing so, God did something else and He did it for us. Now there were two witnesses to the truth of the pregnancy. Now there were two people who had a visitation from God through the angels and could verify that the Lord brought Himself into our world through a virgin girl named Mary. Now there were two people that could attest to the Virgin Birth and therefore attest to the fact that this one born

of Mary, was not an accident, not an illicit affair, but indeed purposeful and pure. More than that, there were two witnesses to the truth of the Baby's identity and that being Immanuel, God with us! And God with us means, God for us too. As we are grasped by that truth, spoken to our hearts by the Holy Spirit of God, we then become His witnesses too!

*How would you explain this passage to someone else?*

*What amazes you by these words?*

*What questions does the passage raise?*

*Write out a prayer based on the truth of this passage of Scripture:*

**Friday December 10th**

***Re-read Matthew 1:18-25 (especially verse 21)***

***“What’s in a Name?”***

One of the things that I tried to do as I worked with Robin to choose names for our kids, was to choose names that had meaning. Our eldest son Aaron Joseph’s name means “The one who adds strength” and Aaron certainly does. Benjamin Christopher is both “the son of the right hand” or Benjamin, and “Christ bearer”, or Christopher...Ben is both of those things, the “power guy” that also “bears the Christ” to people. Jonathan means “the gift from God” and Jon is indeed that and our daughter Abigail means “My father’s joy”...and I think you know...she is! All of our “kids” names fit them well. And I mention it because we’re reminded in this section of Scripture that our Lord was given a name full of meaning. Don’t get me wrong, His name was common in the day, there were many that had the name “Yeshua”...said in English, Jesus. Very common name to be sure, but a very common name with an uncommon fulfillment of the name. My kids names fit them very well...I could give examples...but what’s important here is a reminder that “Yeshua” means “YHWH saves” or simply put, “God saves”. That’s important because of what the angel said to Joseph in that holy dream he was given. The angel says that Joseph needs to name Him “Yeshua” because *“He will save His people from their sins.”* Notice that it doesn’t read *“He will save **God’s** people from their sins”* but *“He will save **HIS** people from their sins.”* The difference is critical because, as you likely understand, Jesus name didn’t simply say something about what He would do, but it said something about who He was. He was coming to save but He was GOD coming to save...His people, all people, from their sins! His name pointed to His atoning work at the Cross and Grave and His name pointed to why He was able to atone for the sins of anyone, let alone all people. He could save because He

was the pure and perfect God of the Universe, come into our world, not for Himself but for us! He would indeed be “*the Lamb of God that takes away the sin of the world*” (John 1:29). His name had meaning, in fact, His name means life and salvation for all who believe!

*How would you explain this passage to someone else?*

*What amazes you by these words?*

*What questions does the passage raise?*

*Write out a prayer based on the truth of this passage of Scripture:*

**Saturday December 11th**

**Read John 1:1-14**

***“God’s Voice”***

As indicated by the previous devotion, one of the more amazing aspects of the birth of Jesus is indeed the fact that He was God in the flesh, or as John writes it here, He was “The Word.” While it’s not immediately obvious from the title “The Word”, John is telling us that while Jesus was a human being, the Son of Mary and Joseph, He was actually much more than that. As we say it, Jesus was “The Christ” or again, as John designates that title here, Jesus was “The Word”. What that means is that in Jesus, in looking at the Baby in the manger, you’d be looking at “The Second Person of the Trinity” as we call Him. Said even more simply, if you’d looked in on the Little Lord Jesus in the stable you’d be looking at the Creator-God in the flesh. And so, John tells us *“In the beginning was the Word and the Word was with God and...the Word was God.”* What an amazing truth! But you’d have to ask the question, why call Him “The Word”? And why connect His birth with the creation of Creation? Well, think of it this way: In Jesus, there’s a tiny baby in the manger, but that tiny baby in the manger who is crying for his mama, also used His voice to speak all creation into being! Indeed, the voice of that tiny baby lying in the manger is also the voice of the Creator God who, as John says it, *“created all things”*. Remember, we’re told in Genesis that God said *“Let there be light and there was light”*, but that same God said to Adam after the Fall into sin, *“Where are you?”* Our loving Lord was heart-broken over what Adam and Eve did as they brought deep-darkness to His light-filled-world. Fast forward to that night in Bethlehem and “The Word” was in the manger because “The Word” came to speak yet again, but this time to speak His love and forgiveness on account of and in the midst of the darkness of our sin and sinfulness! He would re-create us

as He spoke the light of His Gospel into the darkness of our sin! This time He'd not ask "*Where are you?*" but came instead to proclaim "*Follow me!*" as His love and forgiveness was made available to all sinners. "The Word" came that we might hear God's voice in the Gospel message as Jesus would proclaim it: "*I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life.*" (John 8:12)

*How would you explain this passage to someone else?*

*What amazes you by these words?*

*What questions does the passage raise?*

*Write out a prayer based on the truth of this passage of Scripture:*

**Sunday December 12th**

***Re-read John 1:1-14***

***“Overcoming Darkness”***

If you've ever stood in a place at night where the light pollution of our cities doesn't exist and the moon and stars are covered by clouds, you've experience true darkness. That kind of darkness can be very scary to experience whether or not you're scared of the dark as a general rule. That kind of darkness can overwhelm you and bring feelings of fear and claustrophobia! I've experienced that kind of place many times. Just outside of where I lived in San Diego is the desert area where we'd race over the dunes on motorcycles and ATVs and fire up our dune-buggies for the flats. We'd have a blast using the up and down of the sand dunes as our playground and the flats as our speed-track. But all of that fun turned to fear when at night we found ourselves far out into the desert and were enveloped by the deep-darkness of that arid place. I know when I felt that darkness, I couldn't ride fast enough back to camp in order to be immersed in the bright light of the massive bonfires and generator-driven, artificially-lit, campgrounds. But where the light was brightest was in the place where the desert-dwellers would put a torch to a magnesium engine block. Once lit, the magnesium burns so hot that it feels like the sun is sitting on the ground in front of you! More than that, the brilliance of the light it emanates, virtually drives all the darkness away as it lights up the whole valley and makes it seem as though the sun high in the sky, bold and bright! Let me say it this way...that darkness could never overcome that light! Fast forward from my youth to now...and the very different and yet deep darkness we've all felt these past two years. Our country and world seem to have fallen into a palpable darkness and seem to have done so very suddenly. I'm sure, like me, you've wanted to flee that darkness and grasp hold of a light that can dispel not the absence of physical

light, but the absence of morals; the absence of care; the absence of love; the absence of peace. All of us have felt a sense of foreboding and are looking to God for a very bright light that can “overcome” this very dark world we’ve found ourselves in! And yet, we don’t have to look because He’s already provided the Light. In another desert...in Bethlehem of old...God provided the Light of the World in our Lord Jesus Christ! John writes about Jesus this way: *“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;4,5.* In Jesus, our Lord provided the Light that no darkness can ever overcome! Don’t get me wrong, there is still, and will remain, deep darkness in our world, but through the baby born in that desert stable, God sent His darkness-dispelling, darkness-destroying, Light of the World, Jesus the Christ! As we heard just yesterday, Jesus said it this way about our relationship to Him: *“I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life.” John 8:12.* In the midst of a very dark world, we have “the light of life” to overcome the darkness and guide us every day and away from this place and into eternity!

*How would you explain this passage to someone else?*

*What amazes you by these words?*

*What questions does the passage raise?*

*Write out a prayer based on the truth of this passage of Scripture:*

## Monday December 13

### *Re-read John 1:1-14*

### *“Born of God”*

At the end of this section of John chapter one, John writes something very important but often overlooked. John writes this: *“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 1:12,13. First of all, note again that John writes *“to all who did receive him, who believed on His name...”*. All too often we think Christianity far too simple a process... just believe in Jesus? Isn't there more to do, to say, to think, to pray? And the resounding answer from Scripture is “Nope”. (Very theological word “nope” is). Scripture says “nope”, you simply have to believe in “the Little Lord Jesus asleep on the hay” and you will be saved. 1John 5:13 says it this way *“I write these things to you who **believe** in the name of the Son of God that you may **know** that you have eternal life.”* Our faith is all that it takes for us to become a child of God. But the birth imagery that John uses in John 1:12,13 helps us even more in believing that believing is all that's necessary to become a child of God! Let me ask you to consider this: Did you have anything to do with your first birth? Did you tell your parents when you'd be conceived and born? Did you begin and set in motion the processes through which you'd be brought into this world? Let me answer again with that important theological word...“Nope”, no you did not. You were conceived, set in motion and brought into this world and you had absolutely nothing to do with it. And so it is with our faith. John writes *“...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.”* Notice, you were not born, spiritually speaking, *“of the will of the flesh or of the will of man...”*. Your amazing and wonderful status

as a child of God came about simply and wholly because of the will of God! That's the message Christmas. Jesus came to us, when we would not, could not, come to Him. Jesus came to us and was born in Bethlehem's stable so that you and I could be born again...could be born of God!

*How would you explain this passage to someone else?*

*What amazes you by these words?*

*What questions does the passage raise?*

*Write out a prayer based on the truth of this passage of Scripture:*

**Tuesday December 14th**

***Re-read John 1:1-14***

***“Grace and Truth”***

If you'd imagine for a moment standing in the presence of, standing before, God. What images come to mind? Maybe the amazing imagery of Isaiah 6:1-8 where there are rumblings and smoke and loud singing angels? Maybe you see God sitting on His throne and peering down at you, seeing right through you and knowing all the sins you've ever committed? Maybe standing before God is a fearful thought for you, perhaps even far too fearful for you to imagine? While I won't kid you, God is more amazing and more fearful than we could ever imagine, the truth of God's true nature brings us again to Bethlehem's stable and *“the little Lord Jesus asleep on the hay.”* That truth brings us to John's first chapter and these words: *“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. John reminds us that the amazing and fearful God chose to come into our world! The amazing and fearful God *“...dwelt among us”!* That simple phrase is packed with meaning! God...God Almighty...dwelt among us! Why did He do that? Why would He do that? Isn't He busy throwing lightning bolts and other scary things? Why was He here? He was here because while He is an amazing and fearful being, He is also, as John writes it, *“...full of grace and truth.”* Full of grace? Full of undeserved love for us? Indeed He is. While we must remember the amazing truth about our amazing God, namely that He is the Supreme Being of the Universe, He is also our loving Father who wants us...and wants to make us His children through His *“...grace and truth”* given in the Lord Jesus! Thanks be to God that as Jesus would say it in John 3:17 *“God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him.”* Whenever you

consider being in the presence of God at the end of time or the end of your time, consider the fact that “...*the Word became flesh and dwelt among us...*” so that we could, without fear, dwell with Him!

*How would you explain this passage to someone else?*

*What amazes you by these words?*

*What questions does the passage raise?*

*Write out a prayer based on the truth of this passage of Scripture:*

**Wednesday December 15th**  
**Read 2Corinthians 4:1-6**  
***“Light in the Face of Jesus”***

If you look at older paintings of the birth of Jesus, or even some more modern ones, you will see the oddest addition to the back of the heads of Mary, Joseph and of course, the Lord Jesus. There’s what looks like... can I be honest with you?...looks like a holy-frisbee positioned dutifully behind the heads of the Holy Family. An attempt has been made by some artists to help with the interpretation of their art by adding some kind of holiness-indicator-disc to the heads of our dear friends Mary and Joseph and our Lord and Master, the Lord Jesus. Completely unnecessary and completely ridiculous. In our text for today however, Paul writes about what was true. Paul writes in verse six *“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.”* (2Corinthians 4:6). Paul reminds us here of a truth we’ve come across already this Advent and that is the truth that the Creator God who spoke light into being came in the Person of Jesus to speak light into our sin-darkened hearts. Or, as we’ve said it before, the Creator God came to re-create us through Jesus. But when we read that there was *“...the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus”* it does somewhat sound like Jesus did have a holy-glow to Him, a holy-glow about Him, a “holy-frisbee” of sorts. But while Paul is reminding us that Jesus was the Creator God, the God who is light, He was saying something even deeper than that, something that speaks into the purpose of Jesus coming into our world. Paul is reminding us that Jesus came to show us what the glory of God was all about. In Jesus we would indeed see the glory of God, but not some sort of holy-glow-stick there in the manger. No, we’d see His glory! And what is that glory? God’s glory is found in His love and mercy and grace.

God's glory, as seen in "*the face of Jesus*", in the Person of Jesus, was when He showed us His love and His mercy and His grace even though we did not deserve it. In truth, God's glory was bringing us into heaven, into the place where we will, for eternity, look upon God's amazing glory in the face of Jesus and do so without fear or trepidation! Thank you Jesus for coming into our world, that we might be able to come into yours!

*How would you explain this passage to someone else?*

*What amazes you by these words?*

*What questions does the passage raise?*

*Write out a prayer based on the truth of this passage of Scripture:*

**Thursday December 16th**

**Read Luke 2:22-24**

***“Does He Think He’s Above the Law?”***

One of the things we Americans despise to our core is when someone of privilege, someone who has all things handed to them on a silver platter, puts themselves above the law and does, quite frankly, whatever they want! Sadly, it happens all the time and does so even with the law-makers who choose to ignore the very laws they were hired to put into place! We’re repulsed by those kinds of people especially as we seek to live upright and law-abiding lives in our world! Here enters the Lord Jesus in our text for today. We have to admit that if anyone had an unqualified right to be above the law...the law of God that is...it was Jesus. To begin with the law was indeed put into place by Him but it’s more than that, He was the owner of the law. We sometimes make a false distinction between Jesus and God the Father, but we must remember that God Father, Son and Holy Spirit were all present when the law was given to Moses. Jesus indeed wrote the law, gave the law, and therefore owned the law. So...if He wanted to...He certainly could have ignored the law and put Himself above it. And yet, in our text we read those amazing words that Mary and Joseph did for Jesus what was mandated in the law for the firstborn, namely an offering at the Temple. Jesus could have ignored this command and for that matter even caused His parents to ignore it, and yet, He didn’t. No, as Jesus came into our world, He came as law-giver but also as law-follower. He would indeed, as Jesus Himself said it, not just obey the law but would in fact *“fulfill the law”* (Matthew 5:17). But why? Why didn’t He simply set Himself above the law and ignore what it said? Well, remember, Jesus came to live out the law, fulfill the law, but amazingly He did so...for...you! Jesus was taken to the Temple that day so that He could immediately live out His mission to not only forgive

your sins, but live a perfect life in our place. He came to give you forgiveness! And He also came to give you His perfect righteousness! That's what Bethlehem was all about. Said plainly and simply, Bethlehem was all about us! Bethlehem was all about you!

*How would you explain this passage to someone else?*

*What amazes you by these words?*

*What questions does the passage raise?*

*Write out a prayer based on the truth of this passage of Scripture:*

**Friday December 17th**  
**Read Luke 2:25-27**  
***“A Very Special Promise”***

Have you ever had a very special promise from someone? A promise to do something for you that is extraordinary? I know I have. Over and over again in my ministry I've had people both promise us wonderful “things” and furthermore fulfill those promises. In the earliest days of our ministry when we had very, very little, there was a member family who promised to help us get into a home of our own at a time when we'd never qualify for a loan based on my salary! Their promise to get us into a home was then fulfilled when they carried the note on our first home, a home that cost at the time \$112,000. Imagine loaning a friend more than a hundred-thousand dollars, right? Amazingly, when our family out-grew that home and we moved to a larger one, they loaned us more money, this time \$150,000. Needless to say, we felt so blessed not only by their special promise, but the fulfillment of it. In our reading from Luke today, we read of Simeon who received a much more amazing promise from a much more amazing Person. The Lord Himself promised that Simeon would see the Christ before he died. Can you imagine getting such a promise from God? Can you imagine God promising you that you would see the Christ both in time and for eternity? And...actually...you can. You've been given not only that promise, but the fulfillment of that promise. Bethlehem and the birth of Jesus are all about God's promise to be with us and God's promise to be with us not only in time but for eternity! While Simeon's promise was indeed different than ours, nevertheless we have an equally amazing promise through this Christ-child. We get to see the Christ as He lives out His life through us, daily granting us forgiveness of sins and His Holy Spirit's presence. We then get to see the Christ face to face and we do so for eternity! Both of which are very special promises indeed!

*How would you explain this passage to someone else?*

*What amazes you by these words?*

*What questions does the passage raise?*

*Write out a prayer based on the truth of this passage of Scripture:*

**Saturday December 18th**

**Read Luke 2:28-32**

***“The Cool Kids Club”***

Whenever I wear something that’s not exactly in style, I’ve teased with my family that it’s okay because I’m not a part of “The Cool Kids Club” anyway. They quickly acknowledge the truth of it...to which I say, “thanks a lot!” But...at my age and stage...I’m good with it because I’m just not interested in being part of “The Cool Kids Club” anyway. Now, if you asked me about my faith and if I want to be a part of the insiders, those in the know about the things of God, that’s another subject! Don’t care one bit about “The Cool Kids Club” of this earth but I do want to be part of the “insiders” when it come to our faith-lives and eternity! As you read the Old Testament however, you get the impression that if you’re not Jewish you’re not part of “The Cool Kids Club” at all...you’re an outsider, not an insider. That is...unless you read the Old Testament carefully, and indeed, Simeon did read the Old Testament carefully. Notice what he proclaims upon seeing the Baby Jesus: “...*my eyes have seen your salvation that you have prepared in the presence of all peoples, a light for revelation to the Gentiles, and for glory to your people Israel.*” Luke 2:30-32. Clearly this devout Jewish man would have understood that the Lord chose the Jewish nation to be the conduit for the Christ, the lineage through which He would send Jesus into our world (see Romans 9:5). But Simeon also knew exactly what the Old Testament proclaimed and that was that the Jewish Messiah, the Lord Jesus Christ, was coming into our world not just for the Jewish people, but for all people. Jesus, the light of the world, came to bring His light to “all people” and thanks be to God that “all people” category included you and me! Jesus came for the Jewish nation to be sure, but better said, He came to bring light to all nations, bring light to all who walk in darkness. And last time I checked, all of us,

every single one of us, walks in the darkness of our sinful world every day. Therefore, by faith in Jesus and baptism into His holy name, you and we become partakers of the “...*light for revelation to the Gentiles*”. In Jesus, we become part and parcel of “The Cool Kids Club” after all!

*How would you explain this passage to someone else?*

*What amazes you by these words?*

*What questions does the passage raise?*

*Write out a prayer based on the truth of this passage of Scripture:*

**Sunday December 19th**

**Read Luke 2:33-35**

***“Wait...what did he say?”***

Have you ever had a conversation with someone and it's going a certain direction, perhaps even a very positive direction, and then all of a sudden they say something that doesn't seem to fit the moment at all? One of those times when you wonder...did I miss something? Did I hear them right? Are we talking about the same thing...the right thing? We come across a situation like that with Mary, Joseph, Jesus and Simeon from our text. The scene unfolding at the Temple that day with these four must have been amazing to say the least! The Holy Family speaking with a very godly older man who had been promised an amazing promise but had also been given the fulfillment of that promise as they stood outside the Temple that day! I would venture a guess that Simeon was so joyful that his joy spilled over into the hearts and minds of Mary and Joseph. But then, out of the blue, Luke records a bizarre twist to the conversation with these very famous words *“Simeon blessed them and said to Mary his mother, ‘Behold, this child is appointed for the fall and rising of many in Israel, and for a sign that is opposed, and a sword will pierce through your own soul also...’”*. I'm sorry Simeon, but where did this come from? We're celebrating a joyous occasion for this young couple as they come to keep the law by bringing their Son to the Temple. We're celebrating a joyous occasion in your life too, namely, the fulfillment of God's promise to you! More than that, the Messiah is coming to His Temple, what's not to love about that? So, what is this about *“fall and rising of many”* and *“opposition”* and wait a minute, *“a sword”* even? All that said, this shift in the conversation and turn in the story is such an important reminder of what Jesus actually came to do. Jesus did not come to have an easy life, Jesus came to suffer and to give up His life. Jesus didn't come to

hang with Mary and Joseph and live in a nice, neat, nuclear family, He came to bring us into God's family. Jesus didn't come simply to live, but Jesus came to die and rise again for the world. His life would be a life of sorrow. His life would be a life of pain and anguish. And His life would end with all of that and more! And so Simeon is prophesying what Jesus would go through and what He would go through would be terrible both for Him and to be sure, for Mary who would watch it all unfold. And yet, Simeon said something else that was somewhat hidden and yet very important that day. He said "*Behold this child is appointed for the fall and rising of many in Israel...*". Indeed, Jesus Himself would "fall" at the cross as He died for the sins of the world...but the Gospel message reminds us that "rising" was also in His future. "Falling and rising" or said another way, dying and rising to provide the way of salvation for us, for all. When we ask "Wait...what did he say?" we're reminded that everything Simeon said that day pointed directly to Christ's purpose, Christ's work, in our world.

*How would you explain this passage to someone else?*

*What amazes you by these words?*

*What questions does the passage raise?*

*Write out a prayer based on the truth of this passage of Scripture:*

**Monday December 20th**  
**Read Luke 2:36-38**  
**“Speaking of Redemption”**

Imagine for a moment, waiting your whole life for something to happen. We get antsy if we have to wait ten minutes! Oh what am I saying...more like...we get antsy if we have to wait ten seconds! Waiting isn't our long-suit and frankly, part of it is, it's just not something that we experience all that much anymore since we live in a “fast-forward” or “microwave” world! But when we do have to wait for something that we genuinely love and treasure, we know just how good it feels to finally get that “thing”. When we get to that moment of delivery of the goods, we are elated, excited and generally tell everyone who will listen about the amazing opportunity or wonderful gift or exciting relationship that has come our way. And so it was with Anna. Anna was a significantly older woman at eighty-four. In our day and time many, many people live that long but not so in the time of Christ. You can imagine then that living that long and wanting so desperately to see the Lord Jesus was truly an all-consuming proposition for her. Her investment into the things of God is clear in that, as Luke tells us, *“She did not depart from the temple, worshiping with fasting and prayer night and day”* (verse 37). Take note of Anna's dedication to the Lord! Take note of how committed she was to the Lord and His work in our world! She had to have been hoping and praying for Messiah to come. She had to have been begging God to send the Promised One. She had to have been on her knees pleading with God to bring about the redemption of Israel, the consolation of His children, as well as the salvation of the world! And therefore, when Messiah did come, Anna did what would have been quite natural for someone so dedicated. When Anna finally got what her prayers had pleaded for, she did what all of us would do...she told everyone who would listen...she began

speaking of redemption! Luke writes *“And coming up (to the Temple) at that very hour she began to give thanks to God and to speak of him to all who were waiting for the redemption of Jerusalem”* (verse 38). While Anna likely did not know what it meant that Jesus would redeem Israel, she did know this Messiah would bring redemption. She didn’t understand Jesus was headed to the cross and the grave for redemption, but she did understand that He was coming to redeem. And so He did back then and so He does for you! You’ve too have met Messiah! You too know Jesus! Your salvation has been accomplished by our Lord Jesus and when you meet Him as your Savior and Lord...you do what Anna did...you find yourself speaking to others of His redemption too!

*How would you explain this passage to someone else?*

*What amazes you by these words?*

*What questions does the passage raise?*

*Write out a prayer based on the truth of this passage of Scripture:*

**Tuesday December 21st**

**Read Luke 1:26-38**

***“Favored One”***

Avoiding being called the “teacher’s pet” is something that every school kid wants. Now, it’s not that kids don’t want to be the “teacher’s pet” but for others to recognize the favoritism given by the teacher and to subsequently be called-out by their peers for that favoritism, is something everyone wants to avoid. So...is Mary what we would consider to be the quintessential “Teacher’s pet?” Is Mary shown favoritism not just from a teacher but from THE Teacher, the Lord and Master of the Universe? After all, Gabriel told Mary as recorded in Luke 1:28 *“Greetings, O favored one, the Lord is with you!”* I can almost hear that greeting from Gabriel, as he is bowing low and speaking in an high-brow English accent saying *“Greeeeeeeetings, O faaaaaavored one!”* Sounds like a teacher’s pet to me...or does it? Let me ask this: Why was Mary “favored”? Why did Gabriel begin his greeting to the mother of our Lord in that way? To answer that, you need to first of all remember that the Lord chooses people for special duties who will in fact follow Him and honor what He’s asking of them. Mary’s husband to be, Joseph, was one of those people. In Matthew 1:19 Joseph is called a “just man” or “righteous man”. The word means “righteous in performing duties to God and man.” God chose Joseph because God knew Joseph would hear His voice but would also follow His command. Was Joseph then somehow sinless, unable to fall? Nope. Was Joseph going to do every-single-thing God asked? Nope. Was Joseph going to be a model husband and father, without flaw, without slip-up? Nope yet again. Joseph was obedient, but Joseph was far from perfect...Joseph was a sinner...just like every other human being... yes, including Mary. But if that’s true, why is Mary “favored” or “highly favored” as some translations write it? To be sure, Mary, like

Joseph, would hear God's voice and follow Him. Remember what she says at the end of this encounter: "*Behold, I am the servant of the Lord; let it be to me according to your word.*" But to get an answer, let me finish what Gabriel actually said to Mary: "*Greetings, O favored one...the Lord is with you!*" Why was she "favored"? Because the Lord was with her. Why was she "favored"? Because the Lord had chosen her for His duty. So, the fact is then, you and I are "favored" too since God is with us and because He's chosen us for His duty! Oh, you're not Mary. Mary was indeed a singular and special Christian woman. Mary was chosen for a singular duty that only she performed and one that no other Christian man or woman would. She not only gave birth to the Christ, she also raised our Lord, and she watched Him die and she saw Him alive and celebrated His resurrection! Imagine that for a moment and remember then that Mary and only Mary did those things! Nonetheless, you are highly favored too! Why? Because through faith in the Christ-child in Bethlehem's stable, the Lord is with you and has chosen you for His duty...a duty by the way, that He believes only you can perform. Teacher's pet? No. Child of God? Yes! Thank you Jesus that you bestow your favored status on us!

*How would you explain this passage to someone else?*

*What amazes you by these words?*

*What questions does the passage raise?*

*Write out a prayer based on the truth of this passage of Scripture:*

**Wednesday December 22nd**

***Re-read Luke 1:26-38***

***“The Wrong Question”***

In conversations, people will often ask the wrong question. Generally, the wrong question comes from a misguided focus or mistaken focal-point. In other words, the person with whom you are communicating, and to whom you pose the question, is thinking in a completely opposite direction than you are and so their statement and your question don't “matchy-match”.

You are asking the wrong question because you do so from the wrong perspective. And so it is with Mary. In verse thirty-four Luke records this: *“Mary said to the angel, ‘How will this be, since I am a virgin?’”*

Don't get me wrong...her question is a great question! Mary understood the impossibility of being pregnant and bearing a Son. She was a virgin. She had no husband. She knew she couldn't be pregnant and furthermore because she was a righteous and upright woman, she knew there'd be no slip-ups in that regard with the man to whom she was betrothed. In fact, *“How will this be, since I am a virgin”* is actually a great and critically important question! Her question reminds us of the miracle that was happening in her life and in the life of the entire world! The Lord Jesus had placed Himself in her womb. He wasn't a loving-product of His earthly father...He was a sheer-gift from His Heavenly Father! Indeed, Mary was a virgin and so it absolutely does beg the question *“How can she bear a Son?”*...but again...as great as this question is, it's still the wrong question. The question isn't about how Mary can bear a Son, the question really is focused on *“Who is this Son she will be bearing?”* I don't blame Mary at all...I've never come face to face with an angel and certainly not Gabriel, an Arch Angel, so I have a feeling she was anxious, nervous, and shaken to say the least. But in the moment, she completely missed what Gabriel said. Just before her question Gabriel says this about

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.”* Luke 1:32,33. Mary should have asked *“How can this be?”* meaning, *“How can my Son reign forever?”* You see, only God...only God...only God...reigns forever! Her question should have been focused on a miracle greater than the virgin birth. In Jesus she would, and ultimately we would, encounter God Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth! As Jesus was prophesied about in Isaiah 7:14: *“Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign. Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel.”* And Immanuel means? God...with us! God was coming to Mary and Joseph! God was coming to our world! God was coming to us! *“How can this be?”* would have been the right question, if the question was asked about Jesus. And the answer? Jesus Himself said this: *“God so loved the world...that He sent His only begotten Son...”*. *“How can this be?”* The answer is *“God’s love for us!”*

*How would you explain this passage to someone else?*

*What amazes you by these words?*

*What questions does the passage raise?*

*Write out a prayer based on the truth of this passage of Scripture:*

**Thursday December 23rd**

***Re-read Luke 1:26-38***

***“Son of God”***

Tracing your lineage, finding the people representing the branches on your family tree, is very popular right now. People get very excited about what they are able to find out about their families by tracing their line backwards. It's completely understandable that people want to know where they came from and who their relatives are. It's interesting to say the least. More than that though, it gives you a sense of being, belonging. As we finish out our Advent Journey, we come to the spot where we have to remember Jesus' lineage, His family tree. Now, we do know Christ's lineage since the Lord chose to record it in both Matthew and Luke. Matthew seems to be tracing Jesus' lineage from Joseph's side of the family and we believe Luke is tracing Jesus' lineage from Mary's side of the family. We don't need "www.ancestry.com" to do that, it's spelled out plainly in the Gospels. But we do need to remember, as we read those accounts of Christ's earthly family, that His lineage is singular and special. His lineage isn't really attached to the tree that Matthew and Luke lay before us in their earliest chapters. They are accurate and true...when it comes to what others would look at. *“What's His family-line?” “Who is in His family-line?”* Those are definitely questions people would ask of the One claiming to be the Messiah of God, or God's Anointed-One. But as accurate and important as those lineages are to who Jesus was, His true “Family Tree” has no branches whatsoever. His lineage is simple and yet amazing and complex. Gabriel told Mary as recorded in verse 35 *“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.”* The Child will be called “holy” and will be called “The Son of God.” You see, Jesus' family tree has no branches. In fact, Jesus'

family tree is...well...is the tree! Jesus is called “The Son of God” but in truth Jesus is simply “God”. Jesus claimed to be God saying “*I and the Father are One*” John 10:30. So Jesus’ family tree does not have branches because He is the tree itself (See Romans 11:17-24). And yet, in saying that, I’m reminded that His family tree does have branches after all! Indeed Jesus is the tree, but the branches on the tree happen to be you and me. He indeed is the tree as God Almighty, but remember what we read in John 1: “...*to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God...*”. Jesus is indeed the tree..and we, His sons and daughters, are indeed the branches! Through faith in the Babe born in Bethlehem’s stable, you and I are given the right to become God’s children. We have the right to be called daughters and sons of God! We belong to Jesus’ family both now and forevermore. And I think you’d agree, as we celebrate another Christmas this year, that lineage is truly something to get excited about!

*How would you explain this passage to someone else?*

*What amazes you by these words?*

*What questions does the passage raise?*

*Write out a prayer based on the truth of this passage of Scripture:*

