

# Peace Among Us

AN ADVENT DEVOTIONAL

HURSTBOURNE BAPTIST CHURCH



*Hannah Deaton, General Editor*

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*Lovingly dedicated to Sandra Berry, a model  
of peace in a time of pain. For all those seeking true Peace,  
may you find rest in Christ today.*



## INTRODUCTION

I praise God for the Advent Devotional that you are holding in your hands! It is a beautiful mosaic of testimonies and devotionals written by our own church family.

The theme is peace in the midst of a year of pandemic and political fury, and each testimony is a powerful expression of faith. Very special thanks to each contributor. And very special thanks to Hannah Deaton for casting vision for this project and seeing it to fruition.

“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.” | ROMANS 15:13

- *Pastor Jeremy*



## PREFACE

As I thought about the title and theme of this devotional, I was brought back to my time in a refugee camp in Greece. There, during the cool days and frigid nights, I witnessed the search for peace become practical, like boots on the ground. The hard stares of tired people huddled by space heaters, cold hands knitting baby blankets during English lessons, the scheduled hand-outs of government-packaged food, the trailers of worn clothing, and always, the gentle whispers of “As-salamu alakum.” I ache when I think back on this place; an uprooted people, ravaged by war, speaking this blessing to each other, “Peace be upon you.” Those December nights the space was decorated, not with mistletoe, but with a quiet, broken, haunting prayer for peace.

I refuse to forget those days. I want them inscribed and chiseled in my mind to serve as two reminders: (1) whether or not we realize it, our search for peace is just as desperate as if we were refugees, and (2) the search for, hope for, or words for peace are empty without Jesus Christ (Ephesians 2:14).

There are three purposes for this devotional. The first is to be a fragrant offering before God (Ephesians 5:1-2). The second is to show you how Peace resides among us. The third is a prayer that borders every page, a prayer for your peace. I wonder, what does your search for peace look like?

We have found Him, church family. Let us be thankful.

SHALOM ELEICHEM. AS-SALAMU ALAKUM.  
PEACE BE UPON YOU.

- *Hannah Deaton*



## DECEMBER 1

GLEN LAFFOON

In Luke 7:18-35, the imprisoned John the Baptist sends two of his disciples to ask Jesus, “Are you the one who is to come, or shall we look for another?” This seems like an odd question coming from a man who, months prior, had declared to a crowd as Jesus approached, “Behold the Lamb of God, who takes away the sins of the world” (John 1:29). Not to mention the fact that John had seen the Spirit descend as a dove, while the Lord God spoke: “This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased” (Matt 3:17). John’s lack of belief is baffling. How could a man whose entire life had been so dedicated to Jesus now harbor such doubt?

Underneath John’s question is a desperate search for surety, for peace. We should take heart that John isn’t really all that special. Moses (Num 11:10-15), Elijah (1 Kgs 19), Jeremiah (Jer 20:7-9, 14-18), and even Paul (2 Cor 1:8-9) all struggled with doubt and despair. If these giants of our faith had trust issues during moments of crises, then we must not assume immunity for ourselves. And 2020 has been a year full of crises! Surely each of us has had moments of doubt or discouragement.

Be encouraged that your doubts do not disqualify you from your walk with Christ, but do not stop there; take a moment to consider Jesus’ response to John’s question. Jesus did not lecture John’s disciples about theology or prophecy. He did not say, “You have no right to ask me that after all you’ve seen.” He also did not say, “Of course I am the One, John!” Instead, in love and kindness, Jesus sent the disciples back to John, telling them to report all the things they had seen and heard. Jesus knew that his previous words and actions spoke to the truth of who

he was. Jesus' plan to reveal himself was not to give John exactly what John wanted—whether that was rescue from impending death or to be set free to continue his ministry. Instead, Jesus said something akin to “Remember.”

Oftentimes, God's plan is not the same as ours. When life changes unexpectedly, we cry out to God: “Are you really there?” or “Do you have any idea what's happening to me?” The Lord can handle our honest questions. And although our questions may not bring about the changes we hope for, we can take comfort in the Lord's sovereignty (even when we lack faith) and in Jesus's response to John. Be at peace. Stand firm in your faith. God is faithful.

## DECEMBER 2

MARY HALL

“PEACE I LEAVE WITH YOU; MY PEACE I GIVE TO YOU.  
NOT AS THE WORLD GIVES DO I GIVE TO YOU. LET NOT  
YOUR HEARTS BE TROUBLED, NEITHER LET THEM BE  
AFRAID.” | JOHN 14:27

This year, my gardening was purposeful - to reflect the glory of God in the darkness of the Day. I made a “greenprint” for planting with a perfect spot designated for milkweed to attract Monarch butterflies. What a delight it would be to witness a Monarch’s life cycle!

And then it happened! One morning the tiny Monarch eggs hatched, and the milkweed had caterpillars eating leaves! One caterpillar scaled the garden shed to form a chrysalis. Two were put in jars to be watched as they became beautiful butterflies!

The Lord indeed grew this garden. It was to the praise of His glory! It spoke God’s peace into the stormy days and the storms became still!

The garden gave beauty to see and share and good things to eat. It gave our grandchildren delight to see a Monarch emerge from its chrysalis. It gave peace to a friend caught in cancer’s storm. It gave opportunity to share the True and Living God’s glory in creation with Hindu friends in need of hope and peace!

The garden brought peace to this broken season! Advent brought God’s gift of peace into this broken world! The long-awaited Prince of Peace was born. Heavenly hosts announced His birth saying, “Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men!” (Luke 2:14)

Knowing He would be leaving His disciples, Christ gave them only one gift, His peace. His command that they not be troubled or afraid would depend on His peace! (John 14:27)

This gift is ours if we are “not anxious about anything and in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving make our requests known to God. Only then will His peace guard our hearts and minds and give us boldness, confidence and perseverance to stand strong in faith and determined boldness to stand against the schemes of evil! Always we are to trust and never doubt! (Philippians 4:6-7)

## DECEMBER 3

PAUL BOYD

In 2018, my father passed away with Kim and me by his side. He had struggled with dementia for several years and when he passed, I knew he was returning to his Heavenly Father and cherished family. I was happy for Dad and at peace knowing that his eternity was secure due to his faith in Christ. My mother passed of COVID on May 1, 2020. Like Dad, she was a strong Christian. But unlike Dad's death, Mom died at the hospital without any loved ones surrounding her. Unfortunately, the peace that followed Dad's passing was not repeated with Mom due to our inability to be with her.

When I received the call from the physician at the hospital telling me that Mom had little time left, I initially contemplated ways to circumvent hospital rules to see her. The possibility of contracting COVID and exposing others, including Kim, halted that thinking. Not holding Mom's hand at such an important time brought anxiety and grief to me. As time passed, the following thoughts helped me to find peace.

1. I remembered the Serenity Prayer, written by American theologian Reinhold Niebuhr. I first remember seeing it while attending Georgetown College. Niebuhr writes, "God, grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change, courage to change the things I can, and wisdom to know the difference." It is an excellent prayer for 2020, one that helped me realize that the COVID rules that prevented me from being with Mom were there for the greater good and that I couldn't change them.
2. Knowing that Mom and Dad no longer have mental or physical pain due to their eternity with Christ brings me

peace. Neither parent wanted to leave their home, but they had to, as they could no longer function independently. As an only child, moving them from their home to allow for additional care was emotionally difficult. Their physical pain has now ended, and the knowledge that their future is guaranteed due to their baptism in Christ is pleasing to me.

3. I was blessed to have incredibly strong Christian parents who taught me and showed me through their lives how Christians should live. In trying to find peace and comfort after their deaths, I continue to try and do things that would honor and please them. Things like being kind to others, being charitable, changing habits that displeased them and, more importantly, leading a more complete Christian life that honors both my Savior and my parents. I have always felt that our loved ones watch us from Heaven. Pleasing my parents, even after their deaths, gives me comfort.

Revelation 21:4 says, “He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away.”

I thank God for Christian parents.

## DECEMBER 4

AMANDA CREECH-GUNSELMAN

For those of you who know me, it is probably no surprise that I have struggled with anxiety my entire life. Peace is something I've long sought after. When 2020 hit, I thought my anxiety was going to be more than I could bear. But God has taught me lessons about peace this year that I never thought possible.

First, I learned about peace in terms of my health. On the evening of March 26th, I came down with a very sudden illness. When I woke up the next morning, I knew I had COVID. My first reaction was to panic. I spoke with several doctors seeking help. Unfortunately, they couldn't do anything for me. Although doctors are given wisdom for healing, man could not give me peace in this situation. As I laid in self-isolation, I began to draw nearer to God. I found myself listening to hymns for comfort. On one of the worst evenings, I heard the song "He Will Hold Me Fast" and tears ran down my face as I could almost feel the embrace of the Almighty Healer. This was a peace that could only come from God.

During the Summer, I got another lesson about peace. I had gotten engaged back in November and we had set our wedding date for August. I worried constantly about making every detail absolutely perfect. When the pandemic hit, my hopes of a dream wedding were at stake. After I started feeling a little better we began discussing what our wedding would look like. I knew no matter how much I wanted that dream wedding, I couldn't do it. We ultimately decided to move forward with getting married and starting our lives together, but downsized our wedding to only immediate family. Along the way, so many people would apologize to me for what I was going through.

Oddly enough, I rarely felt anxious or sorry for myself. Even when my outdoor wedding got rained out, I was okay. This is a peace that could absolutely only come from God.

It's been a rough year. There is nothing I did or could do that could give me peace in this mess. Even in the midst of 2020, God can bestow in us a peace that defies all understanding. I think of John 16:33 which reads, "I have said these things to you, that in me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation. But take heart; I have overcome the world."

During some of the hardest moments, God has given me a peace that was completely out of character for me and very much unexpected. I will always battle anxiety and will be prone to worry, but God has shown me that he can calm my fears in the midst of the storm. I pray that you find the same comfort and peace.

## DECEMBER 5

DAVID SIMS

To put it mildly: it's been a tough year. Sickness, isolation, loss of employment, suffering, and death are rampant. Sometimes it has felt as though the darkness is winning. It's been easy to feel lost and alone, with little or no hope for the future. Yes, we know that we have eternal life waiting for us after death, but that often seems distant and abstract, especially as we struggle and suffer in this sinful, fallen, pain-filled world. How are we supposed to find the strength to keep going, to have hope for living? To look forward, we first have to look back.

As Christians, we have something that others do not have, but it is something that everyone desperately needs: peace with God. Jesus, God the Son, became a human being, lived a perfect life, died a sinner's death, rose from the dead, and ascended into heaven, all so that sinful men and women would be reconciled with their holy Creator. Jesus secured our peace with God once and for all. If we are in Christ, our deepest need has already been met! The Apostle Paul tells us how Jesus' finished work enables and empowers us to live with hope:

“THEREFORE, SINCE WE HAVE BEEN JUSTIFIED BY FAITH, WE HAVE PEACE WITH GOD THROUGH OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST. THROUGH HIM WE HAVE ALSO OBTAINED ACCESS BY FAITH INTO THIS GRACE IN WHICH WE STAND, AND WE REJOICE IN HOPE OF THE GLORY OF GOD. NOT ONLY THAT, BUT WE REJOICE IN OUR SUFFERINGS, KNOWING THAT SUFFERING PRODUCES ENDURANCE, AND ENDURANCE PRODUCES CHARACTER, AND CHARACTER PRODUCES HOPE, AND HOPE DOES NOT PUT US TO SHAME, BECAUSE GOD'S

LOVE HAS BEEN POURED INTO OUR HEARTS  
THROUGH THE HOLY SPIRIT WHO HAS BEEN  
GIVEN TO US.” | ROMANS 5:1-5

Do you see the relationship? Peace with God gives us hope! Hope -- true, biblical hope -- is not a fleeting wish or an untethered flight of fancy, but rather a rock-solid confidence that God is who he says he is. Our circumstances may be bleak, but they are no obstacle to the sovereign Ruler of the universe. It is finished!

This joyous hope -- the reality that Jesus Christ has won our peace with God and secured our eternal destiny -- is life! This is our reason for living, for pressing on, and for rejoicing always, even in the midst of darkness, suffering, and tears. No matter what this world may throw at us, if we are in Christ, we can have hope for the future because of who God is and what he has definitively accomplished for us through Jesus.

As you look to Jesus, the author of our faith and the guarantee of our peace, “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” (Romans 15:13). Look forward by looking back. Peace with God gives hope for life!



JORDAN SNIDER



## DECEMBER 6

JENNY BARHAM

Years ago, I was in a college class training to be a teacher. Our professor challenged each of us to think of three rules that we wanted for our future classrooms. Dutifully, we all thought of rules that a student might need. “Be prepared,” “Be respectful,” and “Be honest” were common examples. But our professor wisely corrected us, sharing that these were not rules, but expectations. Our classroom expectations were broad and well-intentioned, but they may not have been ideal for students who also need concrete instructions to follow. For example, “Always have a pencil and notebook” will result in more prepared students than a simple, “Be prepared.”

So it is with Scripture. As students of God’s word, it is easy to see that God promises us peace as we seek Him and walk with Him daily. But how does specific instruction play into the promise of peace? What does this look like on a Monday morning as I drive to work? Or when the checkout line is taking too long? Or when money is tight and bills are looming?

Thankfully, Scripture gives us clear guidance for finding peace in our daily lives. Paul gives one of the most uncomplicated set of rules in 1 Thessalonians 5:16-18:

- Rejoice Always
- Pray Without Ceasing
- Give Thanks in all Circumstances

**Rule № 1 – Rejoice.** Rejoicing is a state of mind. We may not be able to control events, people, or conditions around us, but we can control our thoughts. In fact, we are told to take command of those thoughts and hold them captive (2 Corinthians 10:5)!

We are encouraged to think on what is true, honorable, pure and lovely (Philippians 4:8). We are reminded that peace comes when our thoughts stay on Him (Isaiah 26:3).

**Rule № 2 - Pray.** Daniel prayed regularly and consistently three times a day, but even that is not “without ceasing.” What does it mean to pray without ceasing? Paul knows that once our thoughts are captive to joy, then we need to set our hearts captive to prayer. Just like we need air in a continual and constant manner (rather than three big gulps a day), we need consistent and continual fellowship with God.

**Rule № 3 - Give Thanks.** So far, Paul has conquered our mind and our heart. What next? This is perhaps the hardest step: our tongue. This rule creates in us an action that others can see and hear. He doesn't want us to keep our thanks to God, but rather give thanks, in a way that is a testimony to others. No matter the circumstance, Paul wants us to find reasons to be grateful and acknowledge God in his goodness. Throughout the Psalms we see examples of the Psalmist giving thanks and praising God for all to see:

- “I will give thanks to the Lord because of his righteousness; I will sing the praises of the name of the Lord Most High.”  
- *Psalm 7:17*
- “I will give thanks to you, Lord, with all my heart; I will tell of all your wonderful deeds.” - *Psalm 9:1*
- “I will give you thanks in the great assembly; among the throngs I will praise you.” - *Psalm 35:18*

Rejoice always. Pray without ceasing. Give thanks in all circumstances. The result is peace.

## DECEMBER 7

BRIAN GREEN

“THE LORD IS AT HAND; DO NOT BE ANXIOUS ABOUT ANYTHING, BUT IN EVERYTHING BY PRAYER AND SUPPLICATION WITH THANKSGIVING LET YOUR REQUESTS BE MADE KNOWN TO GOD. AND THE PEACE OF GOD, WHICH SURPASSES ALL UNDERSTANDING, WILL GUARD YOUR HEARTS AND YOUR MINDS IN CHRIST JESUS.” | PHILIPPIANS 4:5B-7

As I look back on the year 2020, one word that does not come to mind is peaceful. This year has been marked by a world-wide pandemic, economic uncertainty, and political unrest. Many of us have faced additional fears and anxieties that might trouble us in any given year. During times such as these, it is always tempting to let our lives be marked by anxiety and restlessness instead of peace.

I experienced this very temptation as I watched the first presidential debate of 2020. When the debate was over and I was preparing for bed, I found that my heart was anxious and restless. For the first time in years, I had difficulty going to sleep. To compound the problem, the next day I decided that it was a good idea to listen to a number of different commentators on the debate, all of whom assured me that my fears and anxieties were well founded and would probably come to pass. As a result, I spent the first few hours of that day miserable and without peace because I had misplaced my trust.

But the Lord, in his grace, convicted me of my sin, and so I did what Christians do when they sin. I confessed to the Lord that I had been placing my trust in governments and political parties, not in him. I asked for his forgiveness and for his aid in fighting

that temptation. I turned to his word, and I was reminded of Psalm 3 where David cried out to the Lord in his time of trouble, and the Lord answered him. As a result, David does the only rational thing for anyone to do if the king of the universe has heard his prayer and promised him good; he rests. David says, "I lay down and slept; I woke again, for the Lord sustained me" (Psalm 3:5).

The Bible says that peace is something God gives to all who trust in him (Isaiah 26:3). We can take hold of that peace the same way David did, by taking our requests to God and trusting him with the outcome. In everything we face, prayer is the first act of faithfulness. Prayer is an admission of our dependence on God, and while it is our duty to work hard "as unto the Lord" (Colossians 3:23), we must trust him with the results. It is in that trust that we find true peace, peace that is not founded in circumstance, but in the very character of our God.

We experience God's peace as we place our trust in him. In what areas of your life are you tempted to place your trust in something other than God? What steps can you take today to place your trust in God and nothing else?

## DECEMBER 8

BETH GRIFFITH

History teaches us that earthly peace is fragile and temporary. Civilizations throughout time have experienced war, adversity, disorder, conflict, plagues, drought, famine, and much more. These difficulties are ongoing because we live in a broken and fallen world. Even so, because of God's goodness, we also enjoy times of peace, happiness, kindness, love, and more. During trials, we still see beauty and witness the bravery and courage of humanity.

The Christian is not exempt from trouble. In fact, Jesus guarantees it when he tells his followers, "In this world you will have trouble" (John 16:33b). The body of Christ should expect hard times, distress, and persecution. History and current events testify that the Christian will face difficulties. Even so, the great news for the Christian is, "But take heart! I have overcome the world" (John 16:33c). We know this world is not our home and we know the end of the story: God wins the victory over sin and death!

Jesus promises peace to each believer here on earth when he says, "Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid" (John 14:27). What kind of peace does Jesus give? Jesus gives the Christian eternal peace. The world cannot give anyone genuine peace. Earthly peace is fickle and short-lived. The eternal peace Jesus promises, through the Holy Spirit dwelling in us, secures a restful heart during disturbing, difficult, and fearful times.

How do we find peaceful rest in the midst of trials? As a

Christian who tends to struggle with worry and fear, I know I must cling to the promises of God. Every day I must trust that what He tells me in his word is true. Confession, prayer, reading the Bible, and fellowshiping with the saints are ways to rest in the promises of God. Our Lord guarantees a future home of eternal peace and gives believers the Holy Spirit who cultivates a heart that rests and trusts in Him even in the midst of trouble.

“NOW MAY THE LORD OF PEACE HIMSELF GIVE YOU PEACE AT ALL TIMES AND IN EVERY WAY. THE LORD BE WITH ALL OF YOU.” | 2 THESSALONIANS 3:15

## DECEMBER 9

CHARLES BARNES

How can we find “Peace Among Us” during a time of an unprecedented pandemic, cultural chaos, and international political and military threats? I regret to write that most Christians are looking for peace in the wrong way. Scripture tells us, “For He himself is our peace, who has made us both one and has broken down in the flesh the dividing walls of hostility” (Ephesians 2:14). The Word of God clearly states that God is our source for peace, but we struggle to turn loose and try to “make things happen” on our own. We struggle with seeking God’s will versus charging ahead with our own will.

I am now a senior citizen. It has taken me a lifetime to learn this and accept it in all that I do. We need to turn things over to Him on day one. We pursue our own will rather than surrender to Him. The word of God says “Submit yourselves then to God” (James 4:7). It often amazes us what God can do in our lives when we totally submit to Him. I am reminded of a line in one of the old songs which says, “Let go and let God have his wonderful way.”

Why is it so hard for us to find God’s peace? I believe that for many of us at Hurstbourne Baptist, our secular backgrounds and careers often lead us in a direction that makes it easy not to involve God in the process as we begin to seek peace. Our management or leadership backgrounds make us want to make things happen. We want to solve the problem. Only when we turn the problem over to him, and we pray and seek His will, can we find total peace. We cannot create peace. God the creator is still in control. We must be submissive to His will. Peace comes when we let go and let God work His will in our

lives. With the Psalmist David, we must look to “My Rock and my Redeemer” for true and lasting peace (Psalm 19:14).

## DECEMBER 10

LORI SHARP

“IN PEACE I WILL LIE DOWN AND SLEEP,  
FOR YOU ALONE, LORD, MAKE ME DWELL  
IN SAFETY.” | PSALM 4:8

One of the most peaceful pictures is that of a baby asleep in your arms. No worries. No concerns. They know all their needs are taken care of. The Bible tells us we can lay down and rest every day knowing that God alone is taking care of our needs. However, as adults we have a tendency to take our troubles to bed with us. I don't know about you, but I've never solved a problem lying awake worrying.

There are lots of words we could use to describe 2020: stressful, concerning, lonely, mind-boggling. Peaceful is not a word many would use for this year. For me, it has been a time of learning how to work from home. It's been an adjustment to make our house a workplace AND school. We've learned how to join our church family in worship through the computer. Thankfully for our family, our needs have been provided for and we've seen no disturbance in our home. This is something I am very thankful for.

My family began the pandemic in March with the unexpected death of my father. He had struggled with health issues for several months, but he had just celebrated his 90th birthday on March 1. On March 14 God called Dad to his heavenly home. My Dad was a Christian and had a relationship with Christ. That night, as the caregiver helped my parents into bed, Dad passed from earth to heaven. The sweet lady that was with them is a believer and she relayed this precious story to me. She said, “I knew Mr. Bernard was a Christian. He had told me many

times. However, if he had never told me and I only knew him in the last few minutes of his life, I would know he knew Jesus. The peace on his face as his physical life slipped from him told the whole story.” She later told me that she had cared for people who were not believers and their passing was not a peaceful one. This story of my Dad and his peace is one I will keep in my heart forever.

I share this story so you can know that in the midst of chaos, you can have peace as a believer. Our human nature likes to bully us into thinking that there is no peace, but God promises us His peace in the midst of any storm. If you are not a believer, then I beg you to seek the peace that only comes with a relationship with Christ.



**ROZY SNIDER**



## DECEMBER 11

DAVID BUNCE

“AND LET THE PEACE OF CHRIST RULE IN YOUR HEARTS, TO WHICH INDEED YOU WERE CALLED IN ONE BODY. AND BE THANKFUL.” | COLOSSIANS 3:15

The year 2020 has caused many people to wish that time travel was a viable scientific reality. Perhaps you have heard others say, or maybe you yourself have said, “If only it was 2021 already...maybe things would be better if we can just make it through this year.” The problem is, if you and I live our lives thinking that the grass will only be greener tomorrow, we will miss out on the blessings that God has provided today. I believe that the Bible tells us the solution to our problems is not a time-machine, but a throne.

In Colossians 3:15, Paul gives us an imperative to, “Let the peace of Christ rule” in our hearts. In seasons of frustration, sorrow, and anxiety, we are inevitably going to place something on the throne of our hearts. All humans are made in God’s image and hard-wired for worship; the question is, what will rule in your heart? I was recently reminded of this question while working on a frustrating school assignment, wishing that I could be anywhere or “any-when” else. I would like to say I was peaceful and thankful in that moment, but I was honestly worshipping my own pride and selfishness. The Holy Spirit quietly chided me when I remembered this verse. I was frustrated and fearful, when I could have been grateful.

Maybe instead of wishing for another year, or another assignment, we should be praising God for the moments He has gifted us with, and asking how we may use the time we have

to worship him with thankful hearts no matter where or when we are.

It is no accident that the Apostle Paul draws together the themes of Lordship and gratitude. When regrets of the past and fears about the future threaten to steal our joy in Christ, we should ask the Holy Spirit to help us let the peace of Christ rule in our hearts. After all, his peace is what we are called to surrender to as members of the body of Christ. Every year and every season will be filled with joys and sorrows, but we are called to trust the One who turns our mourning into dancing and puts a new song in our hearts (Psalm 30:11; 40:3). So what will rule in your heart?

When we let His peace rule in our hearts, we can be thankful; thankful for the grace of Jesus Christ, thankful for an eternity with His people, and thankful that in any year we have been blessed to be called ambassadors of His gospel and children of His kingdom. If we remember this, we can find peace in any storm, gratitude in any season, and joy in the presence of our good and holy King.

## DECEMBER 12

KAY BARNES

**“DO NOT BE AFRAID, ZACHARIAS; YOUR PRAYER  
HAS BEEN HEARD.” | LUKE 1:13**

Gabriel, one of God’s most special angel-messengers, appeared to the priest, Zacharias, who was “very advanced in years,” called him by name, and said, “Your prayer has been heard” (Luke 1:13).

Why would the elderly Zacharias still be praying for a child when he was “very advanced in years”? His “very aged” wife, Elizabeth, was barren. Although they were righteous and blameless, both godly individuals had endured great sorrow, torment, and shame from decades of childlessness. I am certain that for years they had each cried out to God. Maybe they asked him, “When are you going to answer? Aren’t you listening? I’ve served you my whole life! What more do you want from me? Do you even hear me?” God had heard. He had remembered. He did answer. Enter their promised son: John, the cousin and herald of Jesus.

That same angel, Gabriel, had appeared to the prophet Daniel 500-600 years earlier with a similar message. In Daniel 9:23, Daniel wrote, “...while I was praying, Gabriel, whom I had seen in the vision at the first, came to me saying, ‘O Daniel, I have come out to give you insight and understanding. At the beginning of your petition an answer went out, and I have come to tell it to you, for you are greatly treasured by God.’”

At a later time, Daniel had another vision and a glorious Heavenly being was sent to tell him, “Don’t be afraid, Daniel . . .for from the first day that you purposed to understand and to

humble yourself before your God, your prayers were heard.”  
(Daniel 10:12)

Even today, you can rest assured knowing God has heard your prayers. What pain are you enduring? What circumstances steal your peace and rob you of your joy because you see no possible desirable outcome? “The arm of the LORD is not too short to save, nor His ear too dull to hear” (Isaiah 59:1).

God’s answers to prayers are “Yes,” “No,” or “Wait a while.” Do not lose faith. We can travail in prayer, but at some point, IN FAITH, we must trust God, change our focus, and begin thanking God for taking care of our seemingly impossible situation (1 Thessalonians 5:17-18); otherwise, we tend to abide in a state of sadness, worry, and general despondency. “Without faith, it is impossible to please God.” Hebrews 11:6. We must “take captive every thought and make it obedient to Christ” (2 Corinthians 10:5). Only then can we rest in the shelter of the Prince of Peace.

This is our faith test. Do we trust God enough to thank Him for an answer which we don’t yet see? Jehovah Shalom, the Prince of Peace, hears us. He knows our every situation. And guess what! He loves the other people involved just as much as He loves us. He knows the big picture and we can trust Him.

## DECEMBER 13

NATHAN & AMANDA GORMAN

In John 16:33, right after explaining to the disciples that He will soon be leaving, Jesus tells the disciples, “I have told you these things, so that in Me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world.” While reflecting on the rollercoaster ride that 2020 has been, two comforting thoughts come to mind. First, 2020 has not been a surprise to God. Psalm 139 talks about how He knew all of our days before one of them came to be. Even though we are uncertain as to what tomorrow will bring, we as followers of Christ can find peace in the certainty that God knows what the future holds and that He has a plan.

The second comforting thought that comes to mind is that this is not the first rollercoaster year through which God has been faithful. God has seen many years of trial and continues to be faithful year after year. It is because of God’s undying faithfulness, His unending power, and His perfect love that we can have true peace in Him. As we experience trials, we can find courage in knowing there is nothing too great for God to accomplish, He will never make a mistake, and there is no greater love than His.

Every year and season of life has presented new and different challenges for myself and Amanda, whether that was patiently waiting to find each other, the trials that come with school, the uncertainty of jobs, and this year, becoming first-time parents in the midst of difficult times. Everything we have encountered, however great or small, God has provided a way through it, even though God’s solution has often looked different from what we had in mind. As we reflect on the past and all the ways

God has been faithful, we as followers of Christ can rest in knowing that the future is in the hands of the Prince of Peace who has overcome the world.

## DECEMBER 14

TERESA SCARBROUGH

When you think of the word peace, what comes to your mind? The birds singing, grasshoppers chirping, ocean waves crashing, financial security, and great stock markets are just a few that come to my mind. Peace, by the world's standards, can look in many different directions. Scripture tells us in John 16:33, "I have said these things to you, that in me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation. But take heart; I have overcome the world." This verse seems so easy to obey and trust, but it is so hard for us to do it day in and day out.

I recall a time in our church when my husband and I had the opportunity to be a part of a three-year partnership with a church in Russia. The goal was to encourage, support, and build a church in one of the small villages there. I wanted to be a part of this mission team, but I was afraid of leaving our small children for a period, especially to go to another country. Our mission team spent time learning the Russian language, studying the Word, and praying for each other and for the Russian people. We even had family and friends outside our own church praying as well. So why didn't I feel the Lord's peace? In John 14:27, Jesus says, "Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. Let not your hearts be troubled, neither let them be afraid." Was I trusting what the Lord said? Unfortunately, no. I realized that I was not trusting in the Lord to take care of my children, myself, or the team. When I confessed my sins and started seeking the Lord's guidance, the peace that He speaks about in Scripture came alive for me.

So, I ask you again, when you think of the word peace, what comes to your mind? I pray that trusting and being obedient to the Lord's calling on your life brings you peace.



## DECEMBER 15

JOE JAMES

My world seems to be shifting right under my feet...and not in a good way!

My age seems to be catching up to me in strange, unwelcome, and very disturbing ways. I'm far too young to be experiencing these kinds of things, and I have too many things to do before this happens. How do I deal with all that?

After sitting like a rock in one house for over thirty-three years, we are moving. It is surprising how difficult and unsettling this can be, even emotionally. Where has my comfort level gone? Is my contentment gone forever?

My country is in turmoil over political dilemmas that threaten our peaceful lives. Our political parties have diverged so wildly that they have begun to actually hate each other, violently. There seems to be no way to peacefully discuss and compromise on differing opinions. How do I deal with these tender issues and reclaim that peaceful existence?

All this is happening around me and the world seems to be going haywire -- even turning upside-down. What used to be called good and right is now evil; and what was weird and wrong is now called right and good and normal. How do I operate in a world that has reversed its judgements and morals in such a short period of time?

There are plenty of things in which to feel depressed, hopeless, helpless, and out of control. How do I gain peace and contentment in the face of this? I don't believe I can find the answer in other people, for they are facing the same issues as

am I. I don't think my family can provide peace and reassurance, for they are looking to ME for help. And I certainly don't believe the government can provide me peace, for I view them as part of the problem!

So I turned to the Bible for an answer, and while searching, found Jesus saying in John 16:33, "In the world you will have tribulation," but, "in me you may have peace." Further assurance is found in Philippians 4:6-7, "...the peace of God which surpasses all understanding will guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus." Then, in Ephesians, I finally get it: Ephesians 2:4 declares and assures us that, "For he himself is our peace." That's it! Jesus, the Prince of Peace, is our peace. He's the one to whom has been given all authority and power, and our peace is in Him.

Because he foretold all these things we are experiencing, and because He has all power and authority, and because He has offered us His peace, it is ours for the accepting. We can even have joy in difficulties, which passes most peoples' understanding, no matter what is taking place. Now I understand more clearly, and even celebrate what Adrian Rogers meant when he said, "Praise God, it's getting gloriously dark." Jesus reigns now and forevermore. Real peace is in Him.



SARAH MCGALLIARD



## DECEMBER 16

SANDRA PETREY & BOB BROCK

*Sandra Petrey*

“BE ANXIOUS FOR NOTHING, BUT IN EVERYTHING BY PRAYER AND SUPPLICATION, WITH THANKSGIVING LET YOUR REQUESTS BE KNOWN TO GOD. AND THE PEACE OF GOD, WHICH SURPASSES ALL COMPREHENSION WILL GUARD YOUR HEARTS AND MINDS IN CHRIST JESUS.” | PHILIPPIANS 4:6-7

These are verses that I have memorized over the years, and I have worn them out over the past year. When my dear husband John went to heaven suddenly at Christmas last year, my whole life changed as I had known it. Continuing to move on is the hardest thing I have ever tried to do. But God always shows up using others to help, encourage, and keep me going. God is my refuge and strength and He has promised to never leave me or forsake me. What a promise! What He says He will do. I am grateful for answered prayer and His word. With Him I can keep keeping on!! Life is hard but God is good!!

Fear does not stop death. It stops life. And worrying does not take away tomorrow's troubles. It takes away today's peace.

*Bob Brock*

“LET THE PEACE OF CHRIST RULE IN YOUR HEARTS.” | COLOSSIANS 3:15

Peace is very important to everyone. It helps you to keep going on the right path of living more like Jesus and walking closer

to him. Many times just slowing down helps us to regain our peace. Look at the lake, the baptistry, the river, how peaceful and smooth they are until stirred. Then in a moment they are back to being peaceful. Sing the song, "When Peace Like a River."

There was a tornado on April 3, 1974. In Crescent Hill there was a lady standing on her staircase, holding a chandelier. She said, "I am ok, I have the peace of Christ which passes all understanding."

Give peace a try. Peace is good for you. Being filled with peace will even help your heart and blood pressure! Keep singing "psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, with thankfulness in your hearts to God" (Colossians 3:16). Let Jesus help you find peace.

## DECEMBER 17

BECKY JUSTICE

*When Hannah asked me if I would write about Peace for the Advent calendar, my first response was “yes.” My second thought was, “Why did I just say yes?” My third thought was, “God please help me.”*

What is peace? One definition says peace is both a supernatural calm amid chaos and the ability to bring harmony to divided factions as modeled by Jesus Christ in John 14:27 and Hebrews 12:14. Peace is not a place, it’s a person: Jesus Christ! Experience peace in your life with God and then love your neighbor as yourself. Peace with God, then peace of God, then peacemakers. The angels said, “Peace on earth” (Luke 2:14). Peace honors God.

In Matthew 5:9 the Bible says, “Blessed are the peacemakers for they will be called sons of God.” The beatitudes are a way of thinking and not natural qualities. They are supernatural, a growing with God with the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. May each of you experience the grace and peace that only God can give.

“PEACE I LEAVE WITH YOU; MY PEACE I GIVE TO YOU. I DO NOT GIVE TO YOU AS THE WORLD GIVES. DO NOT LET YOUR HEARTS BE TROUBLED AND DO NOT BE AFRAID.” | JOHN 14:27

“MAKE EVERY EFFORT TO LIVE IN PEACE WITH ALL MEN AND TO BE HOLY; WITHOUT HOLINESS NO ONE WILL SEE THE LORD.” | HEBREWS 12:14

“THE LORD BLESS YOU AND KEEP YOU; THE LORD MAKE HIS FACE SHINE UPON YOU AND BE GRACIOUS TO YOU; THE LORD TURN HIS FACE TOWARD YOU AND GIVE YOU PEACE.” | NUMBERS 6:25



## DECEMBER 18

DOMINIC D'ETTORRE

Often, in times of unrest in our lives, we seek Biblical wisdom from a friend, family member or pastor. We are often met with encouragement to rely on God and to seek HIS Peace at the foot of the cross. This is beautiful. When the Christian community comes together and points each other to Christ, it truly does not get better than that (this side of heaven, at least).

If you are going through a difficult time, I would encourage you to seek the kind of peace that only comes from our Savior, Jesus Christ. We see Jesus say in John 4:14, “but whoever drinks of the water that I will give him will never be thirsty again. The water that I will give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life.” There is a reason we sing “Peace like a river.” It is because HIS peace is life giving, HIS peace quenches our thirst as it flows, and HIS peace has great force!

But what if all is well? What if we are not under heavy burdens and all our needs are met? Then we must recognize God’s peace in the joys and blessings of our lives. If we take the time to recognize that our peace in Christ is always there, then when life brings what life is good at bringing, we need not walk far if we are already on the banks of the river. Whether our thirst is quenched or we are parched, the river will still be there. Let’s all recognize the power of God’s eternal peace to sustain us.

PSALM 62: 5-8; PSALM 85:8; PSALM 4:8; PSALM 131:3; ISAIAH 66:12; JOHN 14:27; ROMANS 5:1



## DECEMBER 19

MAGGIE EDGAR

Most often, my prayers concerning peace are a request for God to grant me peace. I am anxious about something and I want God to take that discomfort away, or I have to make a decision and I want God to point me in the right direction through a feeling of calmness or confidence.

There are many verses that refer to God giving us peace -- Jesus' words "My peace I give you" and "I have told you these things that you may have peace" are comforting references to God's gift of peace. I recently came across a couple verses that gave me an additional perspective of the role of peace in my life. Like many gifts from God, peace is also something that, after it's given to us, we are to actively use to bless others and, in doing so, be a witness to His goodness. In 1 Peter 3:11, Peter speaks to the behavior of the righteous as he quotes Psalm 34, "They must turn from evil and do good; they must seek peace and pursue it." James 3:18 has an active tone when it comes to peace as well: "And the seed whose fruit is righteousness is sown in peace by those who make peace."

Although I am aware of God's desire for me to be at peace with all men, I don't think I actively "pursue," "sow," and "make" peace. The definition of *pursue* in Strong's concordance is to "seek eagerly after; earnestly endeavor to acquire." What would that look like in my life, if I was a more active promoter and instigator of peace? Maybe I should not just hold my tongue, but go a step further and, in humility, use words that affirm and show love and concern for others. What if, instead of standing to the side when I see a disagreement, I do what I can to reconcile people?

Honestly, I am just getting started at being a pursuer of peace instead of just a receiver of peace. I encourage you to pray about using the gift of peace that God has given you to bless others and point them to the source.

## DECEMBER 20

CHELSEY COLEMAN

I did not grow up in a Christian home and typically only attended church during the Christmas and Easter holidays. However, God blessed me with some amazing friends who helped guide my Christian walk, kept me accountable in high school, and encouraged me over the years. When I went to college and started going to church of my own accord, I found myself being wrapped up in the guidance and wisdom of my pastor's wife, Eleanora Massie. Over the years, she modeled what it looked like to be a godly woman, supportive wife, and faithful follower of Christ.

One of the first Bible verses she showed me was Proverbs 3:5-6: "Trust in the LORD with all your heart; and lean not on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct your paths." Mrs. Massie knew that I sometimes had an anxious or worrisome tendency, and by revealing this verse to me, she encouraged me to memorize it, find comfort in it, and more importantly, find peace in God's Word.

There are many verses that I now refer to when I need to find comfort amidst life's obstacles and challenges, but Proverbs 3:5-6 is still one of my favorites. I leaned on this verse when Trevor and I moved to Greenville, South Carolina four days after our wedding without a job or clear plan. This was also the verse that continuously filled my heart during our three and a half years of infertility struggles, and it was one of the verses that I found myself repeating and referring to as we made our decision to move to Louisville, Kentucky. Those momentous life occasions had their moments of fear and anxiety, yet God continually reminded us to trust in Him and to find peace in the plans that He had laid out for us.

By putting my trust in the Lord, I am deciding to choose to have peace in the Lord. Regardless of my circumstances, I will trust Him, trust His plan, and not allow my own selfish thoughts or needs to get in the way of glorifying Him.

To be honest, some days it is easier than others to find peace and put my trust in God. Maybe you can relate. However, it is by the blood of Jesus and His sacrifice for me on the cross that I can even say that I have peace with God and that I have put my trust in Him. My sins have been forgiven and there is nothing left for me to do other than to celebrate this truth, praise God for the gift of His Son, and find peace in His promises for my life and the plans He has for me.



JESSICA BUNCE



## DECEMBER 21

JOY CRAIG

In Scripture we see various promises of peace, including the astounding certainty of peace with God for those united in Christ. But as I grapple with the current social unrest in our city and world, I find myself clinging to God's promise of a future complete peace as well. I have hope for what is to come -- that one day God will make all things new. This promise is found at the end of Revelation:

“BEHOLD, THE DWELLING OF GOD IS WITH MEN. HE WILL DWELL WITH THEM, AND THEY SHALL BE HIS PEOPLE, AND GOD HIMSELF WILL BE WITH THEM; HE WILL WIPE AWAY EVERY TEAR FROM THEIR EYES, AND DEATH SHALL BE NO MORE, NEITHER SHALL THERE BE MOURNING NOR CRYING NOR PAIN ANY MORE, FOR THE FORMER THINGS HAVE PASSED AWAY. AND HE WHO SAT UPON THE THRONE SAID, ‘BEHOLD I MAKE ALL THINGS NEW.’” | REVELATION 21:3-5

I encourage you during this time of current strife, unrest, and uncertainty, to hold fast to this hope before us. While we continue in our calling – loving God and neighbor (Mt. 23:37-40) – let us look to Christ the King. And as we await the King's return, may we echo the Apostle John, “Amen. Come, Lord Jesus!” (Rev. 22:20)



## DECEMBER 22

JOYCE COLLINS

I like to know what to expect. When I have an appointment or meeting at a place I have never been to before, I want to know where it is, how to get there, what to bring with me, and more. I want to be able to plan, to prepare, and especially know what to expect. I'm always a bit anxious if I don't have answers to these things.

Since the advent of the coronavirus into our lives, all of us are on an overload of not knowing what to expect and precisely how to prepare for things happening in our lives. The phrase “for now we see through a glass darkly” has come to mind rather frequently. This scripture from 1 Corinthians 13:12 has been explained by some as looking into a broken, curved mirror where a few things are clear, a few can be puzzled out, and the rest are a pure mystery. It has occurred to me that the decorative glass in my front door interferes with my seeing in the same way. I can see through small parts of it perfectly. In other parts, the view is definitely distorted but can be “pieced together.” And, of course, there are those parts that are a complete mystery. But despite all my seeing, partly seeing, and not seeing at all, the sunshine always comes through the glass of that door. The sunlight comes through all the parts of that glass, not just the smooth, clear places.

So it is with God's love and care of us. It is easy to see God's love and care in the “clear glass” of our lives. In the anxious “wavy glass” times when we don't see clearly, God's love and care is just as strong. Let's all trust that God's love and care is there for us in the times when it seems impossible to see through.

“OH MAN GREATLY BELOVED, FEAR NOT; PEACE BE  
UNTO THEE, BE STRONG.” | DANIEL 10: 19



## DECEMBER 23

NATHAN JUSTICE

Like most other people, my experience throughout 2020 has been chaotic. My plans were thrown out the window. For the final semester of my master's degree, my residential classes were shut down on my birthday, and I had to celebrate apart from all of my family. Many of my friends lost their jobs and had to find new ways of supporting themselves. Some people reading this may have lost family members due to the pandemic and could not share their last moments together due to medical guidelines and restrictions. In sum, everything we use as a stabilizing factor in ordinary life changed at some point during this year. Trying to find any semblance of peace in this historic moment seems impossible.

Yet this moment also exposes our tendency to rely on created things rather than the Creator. In Isaiah 44:6-23, the prophet Isaiah describes a common example of idolatry to the people of Judah. He pictures an idol being crafted into a human form out of a cypress, cedar, or oak tree. The woodworker meticulously carves this misshapen block of wood into an object that he worships, yet he simultaneously uses the same block of wood to light a fire and roast some meat for his dinner. The irony is palpable. Yahweh, the God of Israel, rightly retorts that, "All who make idols are nothing, and what they treasure benefits no one. Their witnesses do not see or know anything, so they will be put to shame" (v. 9). Yahweh deserves worship because he is the Creator of that block of wood and everything else in the cosmos. He can announce the future, while the false gods say nothing. His promises are unchanging. "Is there any God but me? There is no other Rock; I do not know any" (v. 8).

The false gods that we construct will never bring peace because they have no power. Every time we submit ourselves to a created thing for our ultimate peace and security, it leaves us with empty promises and dissatisfaction. This pandemic has clearly demonstrated that our false gods cannot sustain us. But God, our Rock and Redeemer, says that “you will never be forgotten by me. I have swept away your transgressions like a cloud, and your sins like a mist. Return to me, for I have redeemed you” (vv. 21-22). As we turn to reflect on the birth of Jesus, our Messiah, during this Advent season, leave your idols behind and cling to the rock of your salvation. It is only in him that lasting peace will be found.

## DECEMBER 24

MARINA SHELTON

I caught a glimpse of a smile on the resident's face as my cousins and I walked down the long corridors of the nursing home singing Christmas carols. Those in wheelchairs edged swiftly to their doorway to hear the words of hope they longed for. The familiar tunes brought back a flood of memories—some happy, some sad. We prayed with some of our newly-made friends before leaving them in the silence to which we had arrived.

I can't help but feel a pang of sadness when I think about that day. Silence during Christmas seems out of place—perhaps even eerie. Yet we forget that silence and loneliness were the very atmosphere our Savior was born into that night in Bethlehem. *Silent night, holy night. All is calm, all is bright.* These are the words we sang down those corridors for countless Christmases in a row. But what do they really mean?

Jesus was born after 400 years of silence from God. He was born into a time of governmental turmoil and strife. God's people felt lost in the shuffle of world domination. Could their Father really have a plan?

The silence in this season may have felt unsettling. "God, are you still there?" many likely wondered. This silence felt like anything but peace. But then Jesus arrived.

“FOR TO US A CHILD IS BORN, TO US A SON  
IS GIVEN; AND THE GOVERNMENT SHALL BE  
UPON HIS SHOULDERS, AND HIS NAME SHALL  
BE CALLED WONDERFUL COUNSELOR, MIGHTY  
GOD, EVERLASTING FATHER, PRINCE  
OF PEACE.” | ISAIAH 9:6

The world witnessed hope emerging out of silence. This hope was revealed as God would prove faithful to His nearly 2,000 year-old promise of a Messiah who would restore a broken world—a world that desperately needed peace.

If I were to write a story about a triumphant king, I would have probably placed him in a noble, royal family with a national celebration on the day of his birth. God, however, as the Author of history, placed Jesus in a feeding trough under the stars where only family, friends, and a few shepherds gathered to take in the moment.

God moves powerfully in times of silence.

This Christmas, be sure to find some times of silence in prayer and meditation. Those moments may be filled with joy. They may also lead us to a place of grief. In those times, we can both celebrate and be comforted by the God who moves in powerful, humbling, and awesome ways.

What if those residents got it right all along? Instead of feeling sad at their loneliness, I am humbled by the many of them who used their times of silence to reflect upon the goodness of God. May we all be reminded of the God of Peace, who is worthy of our silence.

## DECEMBER 25

SANDRA BERRY

In 2018, I found myself lying on a hospital gurney in an emergency room awaiting further tests after having just been told I had cancer. My first reaction was shock. But then as fears began to well up in me and tears began to sting my eyes, I did what we Christians do – I began to pray. My prayer was the 23rd Psalm (the only Psalm I knew completely by heart). By the time I had finished reciting it to myself, I was not only at peace, but joyfully so! Whether the cancer proved to be curable or incurable no longer seemed to matter. I knew beyond a doubt I was in God's loving care and would be okay no matter the outcome.

In the days ahead, I had numerous surgeries. I was assured my cancer had been eradicated. However, in June 2020, I was told the cancer had returned. It was incurable and had spread through my body. I have been given 6-12 months before it takes my life. As I write this, I do not know if I will still be breathing when this devotional thought is printed. But I feel like one of the most blessed women in the world. The joyful peace God gave me in 2018, when I first learned of the cancer, still permeates my being. He is still caring for me. He brings me unexpected blessings every day. He has surrounded me with men and women of faith who keep me, daily, in their thoughts and prayers and cannot seem to do enough for me. They are His hands, feet, and voice tending to my needs and sustaining me with loving acts and words of encouragement.

Jesus tells us in the gospel of John, "I am leaving you with a gift – peace of mind and heart. And the peace I give isn't like the peace the world gives. So don't be troubled or afraid" (John

14:27 NLT). I am living that peace of mind and heart. I can testify that God's peace is so much more than the world has to offer. It is the kind of peace that has the power to transform sorrow into joy, hopelessness into hope, and dark days into bright tomorrows. Jesus goes on to tell us, "Here on earth you will have many trials and sorrows. But take heart, because I have overcome the world" (John 16:33 NLT). How blessed are we as His followers! He can, and will, see us through any valley, even the valley of the shadow of death (Psalm 23:4). His goodness and mercy follows us and His rod and His staff comfort us (Psalm 23:6,4). I know, for I am living it one day at a time. So rejoice, Christian brothers and sisters, and give thanks for we are His children and loved without measure. Beyond receiving this great gift of peace with an abiding gratitude, may we always be ready to reflect it to the world so that His name may be glorified above all other names.

#### CLOSING PRAYER

Lord, you are our great Shepherd and we shall not want for anything. May we ever be thankful for the wondrous gift of Your peace that passes understanding. It is real and You gift us with it simply because we are Yours. You are our God and we are your people. Blessed be Your holy name! Amen.



TAMMY HATCHER



## Christmas Hymn

WORDS AND MUSIC: Chris Deaton

1.The shep-herds watched in fright, as an-gels sang at night, No, do not be af-  
 2.For un-to us a child, so ten-der, meek and mild, is born up-on this  
 3.This lit-tle in-fant King, up-on him-self shall bring the judg-ment earned by  
 4.Be-fore this bab-y Lord, who'll suf-fer judg-ment's sword, we all now bow and

4  
 raid. For joy-ous news we bring, the Mess-i-ah King is in a mang-er  
 night. So, go and tell the earth of the Sav-ior's birth, the ev-er-last-ing  
 we who sing of that day where, beat-en, tort-ured there, He's hung up-on a  
 bend, for our souls He will save from the con-quer-ed grave, His death is not the

8  
 laid. Al-le-lu-ia, Al-le-lu-ia, Al-le-lu, Al-le-lu-ia, Al-le-lu-ia, Al-le-lu, Al-le-  
 light. Al-le-lu-ia, Al-le-lu-ia, Al-le-lu, Al-le-lu-ia, Al-le-lu-ia, Al-le-lu, Al-le-  
 tree. Al-le-lu-ia, Al-le-lu-ia, Al-le-lu, Al-le-lu-ia, Al-le-lu-ia, Al-le-lu, Al-le-  
 end. Al-le-lu-ia, Al-le-lu-ia, Al-le-lu, Al-le-lu-ia, Al-le-lu-ia, Al-le-lu, Al-le-

13 **rall.**  
 lu-ia, Al-le-lu-ia, Al-le-lu, Al-le-lu-ia, Al-le-lu-ia, Al-le-lu-ia.  
 Al-le-lu-ia.



## O Come, O Come Emmanuel

WORDS: Latin Hymn (tr. st. 1,2, John Mason Neale, 1818-1876; st. 3,4, Henry Sloane Coffin, 1811-1890)      MUSIC: 15th Century French Franciscan Processional arr. Chris Deaton

1. O come, O come Em - man - u - el and ran - som cap - tive Is - ra -  
 2. O come, Thou Day - spring, come and cheer our spir - its by Thine ad - vent  
 3. O come, Thou wis - dom from on high, and or - der all things far and  
 4. O come, De - sire of na - tions, bind all peo - ples in one heart and

el, that mourns in low - ly ex - ile here un - til the Son of God ap -  
 here; dis - perse the gloom - y clouds of night, and death's dark sha - dows put to  
 night; to us the path of knowl - edge show, and cause us in her ways to  
 mind; bid en - vy, strife, and quar - rels cease; fill the whole world with heav - ens

Re - joice! Re - joice! Em - man - u -  
 pear. Re - joice! Re - joice! Em - man - u -  
 light. Re - joice! Re - joice! Em - man - u -  
 go. Re - joice! Re - joice! Em - man - u -  
 peace. Re - joice! Re - joice! Em - man - u -

el shall come to thee, O Is - ra - el.



## Silent Night

WORDS: Joseph Mohr, 1792-1848  
tr Anonymous

MUSIC: Franz Gruber, 1787-1863  
arr Chris Deaton

Si - lent night, ho - ly night, all is calm, all is bright  
 Si - lent night, ho - ly night, shep - herds quake at the sight,  
 Si - lent night, ho - ly night, Son of God, love's pure light.  
 (si-lent night) — (ho-ly night) —

5

round you vir - gin moth - er and child! Ho - ly in - fant so tend - er and mild,  
 Glo - ries stream from heav - en a - far, heav'n - ly hosts sing Al - le - lu - ia,  
 Ra - dian beams from Thy ho - ly face, with the dawn of re - deem - ing grace,

9

sleep in heav - en - ly peace, — sleep in heav - en - ly peace.  
 Christ the sav - ior is born, — Christ the sav - ior is born!  
 Je - sus, Lord at Thy birth, — Je - sus, Lord at Thy birth.



## To God, the Earth Will Shout for Joy (Psalm 66) Trevor Coleman

1. To God, the earth will shout for joy, In Spir - it, sing His name.  
 2. All, come and see what He has done For fav - ored sons of old,  
 3. For you, O God re - fine our souls through days of weight - y trials  
 4. We bless Your name, let it be heard, You've kept our souls a - live.  
 5. I bring a sac - ri - fice of praise, My mouth, this pro - mise makes:  
 6. Hear, all of you who fear the Lord, I'll tell of what He's done.  
 7. If in my heart I cher - ished sin, The Lord would not have heard.

"How awe - some are Your deeds", oh God, E'en foes will give You praise.  
 The sea found dry, they walked on foot, His sav - ing pow'r re - vealed.  
 Like sil - ver, tried and test - ed us, Still, we will trust Your will.  
 Though fire and wa - ter was our path, Now safe - ty is our home.  
 Through times of trou - ble and of hope, The Sav - ior is my stay.  
 I cried out to Him with my mouth And praise was on my tongue.  
 But, praise to God; for He has heard And keeps me in His love!

Hymntune: AZMON  
 ("O for a Thousand Tongues to Sing")



## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Many thanks to Claire with Pixel Painters, for designing the cover and template of this devotional. The Lord has blessed you with the impressive gift of turning ideas into art.

Special thanks to each contributor for your writing, artwork, and music. I have been inspired by your talent and your willingness to share your heart with our church family.

Thanks to the Team of Pastors who helped encourage and push this project forward.

And finally, I give my humble thanks to the Lord, who sustained every breath we took and move we made as we worked on this devotional.

For His glory and our good.

- *Hannah Deaton*

