



WHEN **GOD** COMES

HOLY CROSS LUTHERAN CHRISTMAS
DAILY DEVOTIONAL BOOKLET

It's that time of year: time to get out the decorations, make plans for the parties and family gatherings, and dive into the whirlwind of Christmas.

Yes, we are all a little anxious about all of that.

But the Christmas story isn't about you or me: it's about **When God Comes**. God as a baby, lying in a manger, here with us. When God Comes, things happen and people's lives are changed.

God comes into our lives in different ways and at different times. There are moments, experiences and people that impact us and our faith in big and small ways.

The ministry team at Holy Cross Lutheran worked together to write these daily devotions for you. We want you to have a moment each day When God Comes to you, because throughout the Bible, "When God Comes," amazing things happen.

We pray that this gift strengthens your faith, encourages you to join us for worship in person or online each week, and inspires you to live with joy and confident hope until the day when Jesus comes again.

Merry Christmas!

The Ministry Team of Holy Cross Lutheran

December 1

When God Comes, There is Hope for Me.

For everything that was written in the past was written to teach us, so that through the endurance taught in the Scriptures and the encouragement they provide we might have hope. Romans 15:4

Therefore, with minds that are alert and fully sober, set your hope on the grace to be brought to you when Jesus Christ is revealed at His coming. 1 Peter 1:10-13

Paul prays for the churches in Ephesus. He says he keeps asking God that the eyes of their heart may be enlightened so that they may know the hope to which he has called them.

Did you catch it?

Paul kept praying and praying and praying that the eyes of their heart may be opened to a great understanding of the hope that they were called to, that they may **know** this hope. God's greatest desire is for you to understand and feel the hope he has for you. He fulfilled all of His promises when he sent His son as a baby into this world a few thousand years ago. And God is still keeping His promises.

Your life may be hard, and the state of the world even harder, but God is making all things **new**. So, the present state of your life or of this world **doesn't** determine the meaning of your life. Paul prays, and we pray, that you may be able to see your present circumstances in light of your future hope.

Dear God, guide me in your truth and teach me, for you are God my Savior, and my hope is in you all day long. Psalm 25:5

Andrea Hauser

December 2

When God Comes, Suffering is Not Meaningless.

So we do not lose heart. Though our outer self is wasting away, our inner self is being renewed day by day. For this light momentary affliction is preparing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison, as we look not to the things that are seen but to the things that are unseen. 2 Corinthians 4:16-17

I love the Christmas season. It brings me great joy. I love Christmas lights, Christmas trees, Christmas carols, time with family, gifts, and even a little snow. But for the past few years, Christmas has been hard. My husband, Tim, lost a battle with cancer a few years ago, and Christmas is one of those times when his absence is very apparent. Sometimes it is just hard to be joyful.

The sadness that I feel reminds me that we live in a broken world. A world that is not how God intended it to be. A world in which many people are experiencing suffering and pain. Perhaps that suffering is from the loss of a job and difficulty putting food on the table. Or a broken relationship. Or physical pain or illness. Or loneliness and isolation. Or the loss of a loved one. And it all seems so meaningless. Why would God allow this suffering to happen? What good can possibly come from it?

During Tim's illness, I found myself asking God those questions pretty frequently. This was not our plan. We were going to grow old together and travel the world. I hated seeing him suffer. I hated the thought of being alone. So, I prayed for a miracle. That would certainly be a great story to tell, and an opportunity to witness to His glory. That would give our suffering meaning. But that was not God's will.

Instead, God used the time of Tim's illness in ways we could never have imagined. I cannot begin to describe the incredible witness to his faith that Tim demonstrated during that journey. He felt called to share the message of God's grace with anyone who would listen, and at times he shared it with those who didn't really want to hear it. He even wrote a book about his faith.

God worked through that time to strengthen our faith and trust in Him. He gave us a peace that was totally unexplainable. He used our lives to touch many people. He showed us how we are a part of something bigger, and he showed us the very best in people. We were surrounded with love and support in ways that we had never experienced before. I would never say that I am glad we had to go through that time.

Suffering is never good from our human perspective and is hard to understand. But I can tell you what we discovered. If you are looking for Him, God will reveal Himself, even in the midst of your suffering. And I know “that in all things God works for the good of those who love Him, who have been called according to His purpose” (Romans 8:28) and that our suffering did have meaning.

Dear God, help me remember that You sent Your one and only Son to earth because You love me and want me to spend eternity with You, and “that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to us” because of Jesus. Romans 8:18

Michelle Searcy

December 3

When God Comes, My Dry Bones Come To Life.

The hand of the Lord was on me, and he brought me out by the Spirit of the Lord and set me in the middle of a valley; it was full of bones. He led me back and forth among them, and I saw a great many bones on the floor of the valley, bones that were very dry. He asked me, “Son of man, can these bones live?” Ezekiel 37:1-3

We spent nearly two weeks driving through the Southwestern parts of the United States, exploring the National Parks with our children. As we drove, I was amazed at how much variety there was in the landscape: deserts, mountains, and even lush tropical areas. The question that kept coming to mind in the desert lands was: “How do people **live** out here? There was a lot of nothing! No water. No trees. No grass. No **stores!**

Our own life can be like the landscape of the Southwest: filled with mountain top experiences, times when we feel filled to overflowing with goodness, bounty and grace, and times when we feel depleted, alone and empty.

We are reminded in this passage to “Hear the word of the Lord” and that the Word of the Lord gives new life, hope for resurrection, and passion for the Lord. In times when we feel depleted, alone and empty, go to God’s Word. When you have times to celebrate, go to God’s Word. When you have nothing, go to God’s Word. In **Him** you will receive life, hope and passion.

May this Advent season be one where you hear the Word of the Lord and be filled with new life in Jesus.

Father in heaven who breathes life into me, thank you for that gift. May your Spirit continue to breathe into me that I may live passionately for you.

Melissa Luepke

December 4

When God Comes, Prayers Get Answered.

But the angel said to him: “Do not be afraid, Zechariah; your prayer has been heard. Your wife Elizabeth will bear you a son, and you are to call him John. He will be a joy and delight to you, and many will rejoice because of his birth, for he will be great in the sight of the Lord.” Luke 1:13-14

Our youngest daughter Ivy has Down syndrome. This was an unexpected diagnosis at her birth. To say that our family’s prayer life has changed or increased since her arrival would be a massive understatement. When you are handed something in life completely unexpected, or something you know nothing about, it feels at times all you have is prayer.

There are numerous stories I could share with you about my prayers for Ivy and God just “showing up.” Back in the spring of 2020, shortly after the pandemic started Ivy was a tad ill; she wasn’t eating much and was just being difficult. This didn’t really alarm us: she had just turned two! But one day she was crying and Jason said, “wow, her tonsils are **huge!**” For the next few months we did virtual visits with doctors trying to get her an appointment to get her tonsils removed during the pandemic.

Finally we got a date. Prior to surgery, I asked a nurse if they could take a look at her ear tubes while he was in there. I reminded a different nurse on the day of the surgery. When the surgeon came in, I asked again and he said, “Sure, no problem.”

The doctor came out and said the removal of her tonsils went just fine, but then he asked if we had any concerns about her hearing. Jason and I replied, “Not at all. She is chatting up a storm talking about everything. If you ask her to take something to her room she’ll do it.” He asked if we recalled her having an ear infection recently. Again, no.

The doctor said that when he looked at her ear tubes, he found an old infection that never drained out. He removed it, but the infection caused holes inside her ear drums, and then he started talking about hearing aids, and her possibly having one implanted when she gets older.

That’s when I remember my brain feeling like it was swirling outside of my head. I interrupted him and said, “Do you think this is permanent damage?” He said it was highly likely it was.

I couldn’t believe him, and I kinda think I **wouldn’t** believe him. She was talking so much, and so responsive. We came in for a tonsillectomy and now you’re telling me my little girl has severe permanent hearing loss due to an old infection we didn’t catch? The range of emotions was too much: guilt that we didn’t catch the ear infection that caused this, and sadness and frustration that we had another hurdle to navigate.

The doctor said we will do a follow up exam and hearing test in six weeks to see if there is any improvement. He repeated that it would be highly unlikely given the size of the hole it would close, but sometimes it happens.

We prayed for little Ivy’s ears just about everyday, sometimes multiple

times a day. I said, "Lord, I know You are bigger than those holes in her ears. The doctor has his science and his experience, but I have You! The doctor said there's no way, but I believe You make ways!" We prayed for the Lord to heal her ears, for His will to be done, and for it all to be to the glory of His name, that all may see and know God did this!

Six weeks later, Ivy and I went to her checkup. The doctor looked in her left ear and exclaimed, "Wow!" Miraculously, the hole had completely closed! I still remember the sense of peace and confidence in the Lord I felt in that moment. I was thinking, "Well, of course it did. That is who God is!" I told the doctor we had been praying for those ears for six weeks straight, so I wasn't surprised one bit!

Now, the right ear still has a hole in it, and I wondered why God only healed one ear? Did I not pray enough or hard enough? I told a friend who gently reminded me, "Nicole, the left ear is the miracle!"

I asked the surgeon on the day of Ivy's tonsil removal why no other doctors had found this. He said it was too far in and could have only been seen through surgery. I believe the Lord put it on my heart to mention her ears to show us something we didn't even know to look for. A miracle inside of another miracle!

We have a God who loves us, hears us and truly wants good for our lives. He wants us to see and experience miraculous moments. In the Christmas story, God answered Zechariah and Elizabeth's prayers for a son when they were well beyond normal childbearing years.

When the mess you're in seems too big, when "there's no fixing this one," God is there waiting to show you one of those little "left ear" miracles! Pour out your heart and ask Him to miraculously close up a hole that needs fixing in your life. It may not happen when you want it to: Zechariah and Elizabeth waited a long time. Sometimes life is truly challenging, and you're stuck on a "right ear problem" that just won't close. That's OK. Keep praying, keep believing, and keep trusting that God will come through for you just like he has for Ivy, and if you ask her what God's done in her life, you might just get a, "Yay, God!" in response. Just make sure you whisper it in her left ear...for now!

Nicole Lopez

December 5

When God Comes, He Makes Us Uncomfortable.

*“Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.
Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted. Blessed are the
meek, for they will inherit the earth.” Matthew 5:3-5*

During one particular Advent season, I became the biggest Oak Ridge Boys fan! Don't judge. We own the vinyl of all their Christmas albums - yes, all of them. One of my favorites is a song called, “An Inconvenient Christmas”. The song begins:

*Among the bills that I'd received was a postcard marked,
“Apologies, the Christmas gifts you ordered aren't in stock”
So I packed up the kids for Grandpa's house.
Then a blizzard blew in and the car broke down,
So, we shared a quart of eggnog at a truck stop”*

The family going through this debacle ponders whether what has transpired is bad or not, but instead land on the fact that it's just **inconvenient and uncomfortable**. Jesus allows for us, and sometimes makes us uncomfortable. One of the final lyrics of this song gets to the Christmas story:

*A young girl expects a child she can't explain,
Forced to walk a hundred miles just to give birth in the hay.
While the king at that same hour, fearing challenge to his power,
Sent his troops to track them down and wipe them out. Yep, hands down.*

Is it good or bad? It's inconvenient and uncomfortable, and that's where the Holy Spirit loves to work! The Bible verse mentions the “poor in spirit,” “those who mourn and “the meek.” Those sure don't sound like comfortable places, but it's where God promises to be and present to us some incredible gifts! This holiday season, it can be easy at times to label time with family, restrictions on events, and unforeseen circumstances “good” or “bad.”

Consider a new label in the hard times: **inconvenient**. God has done amazing things on inconvenient, uncomfortable Christmases.

Dear God, You came as a King in a manger and gave us a gift with hands and feet we can't afford. God, though there will be inconvenient and uncomfortable times during this Christmas season, help us remember the most inconvenient Christmas of all time while keeping in mind what you are able to do with inconvenience and discomfort. Give us your eyes to provide comfort to others this season who need it as we await your Son's second coming!

Brandon Grelle

December 6

When God Comes, We Get Help.

But very truly I tell you, it is for your good that I am going away. Unless I go away, the Advocate will not come to you; but if I go, I will send Him to you. When he comes, he will prove the world to be in the wrong about sin and righteousness and judgment: about sin, because people do not believe in me; about righteousness, because I am going to the Father, where you can see me no longer; and about judgment, because the prince of this world now stands condemned. I have much more to say to you, more than you can now bear. But when he, the Spirit of truth, comes, he will guide you into all the truth. He will not speak on His own; he will speak only what he hears, and he will tell you what is yet to come. He will glorify me because it is from me that he will receive what he will make known to you. All that belongs to the Father is mine. That is why I said the Spirit will receive from me what he will make known to you." John 16:7-15

In these words, the work of the Holy Spirit is revealed. As we prepare our hearts for the second coming of Christ, it is important to learn about the **help** Jesus taught us about:

But when he, the Spirit of truth, comes, he will guide you into all the truth.

This verse from today's scripture caught my attention. It made me think of when my young son was diagnosed with cancer. Things happened fast with little time to process, only to be afraid and confused. Our son was supposed to be proposing to the love of his life, not worrying that he was now broken and possibly unwanted.

As my husband and I sat in the waiting room and the surgery was about to begin, a friend sent us a song, "Trust in You," by Lauren Daigle. We both listened with tears, lots of tears. We realized that the Holy Spirit had shown up to speak truth to us and to carry us through this scary day.

Whenever doubts flooded our thinking in the coming months, my husband and I would play the song. It was the perfect reminder to trust in the Lord no matter the circumstance.

My son was thankful, too. God showed up to guide us all.

Just so you know, he did propose in front of the altar at church four days after surgery. It was the perfect way to begin their life together with the Holy Spirit, the helper in the midst of the moment. God is always at work, giving us the help we need to get through whatever our next steps are.

Dear Holy Spirit, I am so thankful for your guidance and help that is so desperately needed. Help me to seek the support you provide during difficult times, see the hope in the birth of my Savior, and to empower me to bring others to know our Father.

Karen Geiger

December 7

When God Comes, It's About Forgiveness.

His father Zechariah was filled with the Holy Spirit and prophesied, "Praise be to the Lord, the God of Israel, because he has come to His people and redeemed them. And you, my child, will be called a prophet of the Most High; for you will go on before the Lord to prepare the way for him, to give His people the knowledge of salvation through the forgiveness of their sins, because of the tender mercy of our God, by which the rising sun will come to us from heaven to shine on those living in darkness and in the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the path of peace." Luke 1:67-68, 76-79

Zechariah gets it! Before Jesus is even born, Zechariah understands God's plan. He proclaims that his son, John (the Baptist) will announce the coming of "the Most High" the promised Messiah. God! As Zechariah studied the Scriptures, he knew that the Messiah's purpose is to shine a light in the darkness of this messy world and to forgive sins.

At Christmas time, people put up all kinds of lights: on houses, and trees, and lights in windows. We drive around just to look at the lights. Isn't it ironic that at this time of year when the world is filled with lights, many people feel the darkness?

Is there any darkness in your world this Christmas? The loss of a loved one, broken relationships, friends who are no longer talking due to political disagreements, or arguments. Maybe you are just tired of it all, a little cranky, a little more cynical, or maybe a bit isolated and lonely.

This season as you are preparing your heart to celebrate Christmas, take a moment today to face our own hurt and mistakes and ask God for forgiveness. Ask God into those dark places and ask him to remind you of the hope that we have in Jesus. Maybe there's a relationship you need to heal. Who do you courageously need to reach out to and ask for forgiveness? Whom do you need to forgive?

When you find yourself feeling guilty or ashamed, God comes and places a baby in your arms. Not just any baby, but the Messiah who Zechariah spoke about: the one who brings forgiveness to you. Maybe this Christmas, Jesus will guide your feet into the path of peace. Peace on Earth and peace in your heart.

Christmas is not a "Santa Claus" story about **me** proving how good I am so I get presents. It's about **God** coming to me to forgive me! That has always been the plan.

Lord, let me take hold of Jesus and move me to forgive as I have been forgiven. Shine a light in my heart, and let me walk on the path of peace.

David McClean

December 8

When God Comes, The Unlikely Are Chosen.

Brothers and sisters, think of what you were when you were called. Not many of you were wise by human standards; not many were influential; not many were of noble birth. But God chose the foolish things of the world to shame the wise; God chose the weak things of the world to shame the strong. God chose the lowly things of this world and the despised things—and the things that are not—to nullify the things that are, so that no one may boast before him. 1 Corinthians 1:26-29

When I was in elementary school we would play kickball at recess. Somehow, two team captains were chosen, and then they took turns picking people for their team. They would pick their friends, and then the most athletic kids, etc. I was usually one of the last to be chosen because I wasn't very good at it.

I always hated being one of the last to be picked. Even now I experience times when I feel rejection, times when I don't feel valuable, times when I feel that I am just not good enough.

I would guess that you have felt that way too, but I am reminded in Scripture that even if that is how I feel about myself, that is not how God sees me, or how He sees you. In God's eyes, we are His masterpiece. We are a "chosen people" (1 Peter 2:9), and He has a plan for us (Jeremiah 29:11).

As I watch God working out His plan, I can't help but think that He has a sense of humor. He seems to choose some of the most unlikely people for His work! The disciples were twelve ordinary men: fishermen, tax collectors, political zealots, and yet He chose them to take His message to the world. How about a young girl named Mary, who was chosen to be the mother to Jesus? Or Joseph, a small town carpenter? Or you and me?

If you had told me years ago that I would be working in a Christian school and church, I probably would have laughed. Yes, I was a Christian, but I did not go to school to be a church worker. I studied in medicine and business. I worked in hospitals. I read my Bible, but I was by no means a Biblical scholar. It would make no sense for God to ask me to serve in a church. I would be woefully inadequate for the job.

But you've probably heard it before: God does not call the equipped: He equips those He calls. God called me to step out of my comfort zone and follow Him: to be His disciple and to work in a church. It has been life changing for me.

You may not be in a place where your job or life has placed you in a position of Christian leadership, but you are still called to be a Christian leader in your life, right where you are. You have the ability to show Jesus to others every day, just by the way that you live. You don't need any special skills: He will give you what you need. God has chosen you, and He will equip you. What is He calling you to do?

Michelle Searcy

December 9

When God Comes, He Puts You In the Right Place at the Right Time.

If you remain silent at this time, relief and deliverance for the Jews will arise from another place, but you and your father's family will perish. And who knows but that you have come to your royal position for such a time as this?" Then Esther sent this reply to Mordecai: "Go, gather together all the Jews who are in Susa, and fast for me. Do not eat or drink for three days, night or day. I and my attendants will fast as you do. When this is done, I will go to the king, even though it is against the law. And if I perish, I perish." Esther 4

The story of Esther fits well into our world where physical appearance is a constant source of peer pressure and frequently a topic on social media. Esther becomes the favored wife of King Xerxes because of her appearance. Haman, the highest of the nobles in the court of King Xerxes, persuades Xerxes to kill all of the Jews.

"Dispatches were sent by couriers to all the king's provinces with the order to destroy, kill and annihilate all the Jews."

Esther is a Jew! This was her critical moment. Maybe she had become the queen, "for such a time as this." She could plead for the King to reverse this order. It was against the law to go before him uninvited, so it was possible that she could lose her life. That's when she utters the critical words, "If I perish, I perish."

In our Rite of Confirmation we ask, "Do you intend to remain true to your confession of faith and suffer all, even death if necessary, rather than fall away from your faith?" With our answer, "I do so intend, with the help of God," Esther's words become our words!

How can you use your various positions as parent, coach, team member, neighbor, to always be alert to opportunities to love, support and help people God places in your life?

Maybe there is someone in your life who you could bless this Christmas. Maybe there is a family member or friend who doesn't believe in Jesus at this moment in their life. Maybe God has placed you in their life "for such a time as this." Christmas time opens doors for us to share what Christmas truly means to us. You don't have to be a beauty queen to "be the church." You just have to be you and be open to the Holy Spirit moving in your life.

Lord, keep my eyes and ears open to the people you have placed in my life. Make me bold to respond when you create opportunities for me to love people and help them to see Jesus this Christmas. Holy Spirit, use the best of me this Christmas so people see Jesus in me.

David McClean

December 10

When God Comes, Miracles Happen.

And there were shepherds living out in the fields nearby, keeping watch over their flocks at night. An angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. But the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid. I bring you good news that will cause great joy for all the people. Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is the Messiah, the Lord. This will be a sign to you: You will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger." Suddenly a great company of the heavenly host appeared with the angel, praising God and saying, "Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace to those on whom His favor rests." When the angels had left them and gone into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, "Let's go to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has told us about." Luke 2:8-15

The birth of a child is a miracle and exciting. When I received the phone call on June 13 that my daughter-in-law was heading to the hospital for the birth of my grandchild, I jumped in the car and headed to Kansas City. I was intent on holding that baby and singing my song as soon as she was born.

Once in that hospital room, my life was changed forever. I can't imagine what it would have been like to be a shepherd in the fields and have angels appear. The Messiah is here! I wonder, did they speed and accidentally leave their spouse behind like I did?

I don't know, but what is clear is their obedience and faith in God. They were not afraid, believed the good news, and went to share it with others. God picked them. The shepherds' lives were changed forever that night. God picks you, too, and hopes the Christmas miracle changes your life.

Dear God, thank you for sending your only Son for all of us. Help me to have bold faith to be fearless in sharing the good news of Jesus Christ and living my life as if you are coming back today.

Karen Geiger

December 11

When God Comes, Weak Links Become Mighty Warriors.

*Beat your plowshares into swords and your pruning hooks into spears.
Let the weakling say, "I am strong!" Joel 3:10*

That's the stuff movies are made of. It's one of the finest ingredients in a memorable sports classic: the weak link becomes a mighty warrior! My favorite "weak link" to "mighty warrior" story doesn't involve an undefeated dynasty being defeated; it's a smile that kills sadness.

My brother Dusty is society's definition of weak in many ways. Being born with his umbilical cord around his neck and given three days to live back in 1980, he continues life in Seymour, Indiana. He's never taken one step, never caught one ball, never 'defeated' anyone. In a wheelchair or in his bed, you wouldn't think he would attain Mighty Warrior status. But you'd be wrong. When his 40th birthday arrived last year, his Facebook wall became an electronic plaque of all his victories and accolades!

The enemy? Sometimes it was depression or sadness, other times it was anger and anxiety. On his Facebook page, many had elaborated on times where they were down and out and all it took was his smile and contagious joy. No sling, no plan, and most of the time, no words.

In the verse above from the book of Joel, even the farmers become mighty warriors. Now, let me tell you: I know some farmers who are among the strongest people I know, but they aren't trained to fight. But, God's math has always been $YOU + JESUS = MORE THAN ENOUGH$. Dusty isn't trained to be a psychotherapist, but his online smile wields the power to heal depression, anxiety, and sadness. Just what we need right now!

The Lord is a Warrior and is mighty in battle (Exodus 15:3). From heaven to earth to the cross to an empty tomb, to the Holy Spirit inside of us.

On this side of heaven, there will always be battles. Some might wield

swords, some might wield sadness. In **all** your battles, God invites the weak to say "I am a warrior", and empowers them to not only be conquerors but to celebrate the victory with your brothers and sisters in Christ!

Dear God, You are a Warrior. Thank you for making us strong! As we celebrate the coming of Jesus, help us remember we are celebrating the baby who would later conquer death. Allow us to join you as you conquer death in our everyday so that we may celebrate the joy that came to the world! In You is life, in You is victory!

Brandon Grelle

December 12

When God Comes, He Teaches Us to Say, "No."

For the grace of God has appeared that offers salvation to all people. It teaches us to say "No" to ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright and godly lives in this present age, while we wait for the blessed hope - the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ, who gave himself for us to redeem us from all wickedness and to purify for himself a people that are His very own, eager to do what is good. Titus 2:11-14

Why is it hard to say no to things and behaviors that are self-destructive, and to things that get in the way of our ability to reach out to others with caring hearts and open eyes and ears? Why is it so easy to be self-centered and judgmental?

Our sinful nature makes this a foregone conclusion without the knowledge of what Jesus did for all of us on the cross. We are redeemed from wickedness and our sins washed clean because we have God's grace.

It is difficult to see the pains of others through muddied eyes: we need to say “no” to looking away. It is difficult to reach out to others when hands are clinched in fists: we need to say “no” to our anger and lean forward with open arms. It is difficult to hear the cries of the hurt and needy when our mouths are always shouting: we need to say “no” to overtly critical discourse and listen with empathy and clarity of mind.

For it is when we say “no” to such things, that we do not waste our precious time left here on Earth with selfish pursuits. We make an impact through building relationships, not walls, within our family of God. I know that when I say “no” to selfish thoughts and actions, that I am slower to anger and frustration, and quicker to being the light of Jesus to others.

So, this season we need to say “no” to the trappings of our world and allow the renewing mercy of God to transform us in ways that enable us to hear when we listen, see when we look, and touch when we reach out.

Dear Lord, grant us the strength to fight through the din and stress of this world. Help us to become eager to do what is right and good in Your eyes.

Mike Short

December 13

When God Comes, The Lost Are Found.

Now the tax collectors and sinners were all gathering around to hear Jesus. But the Pharisees and the teachers of the law muttered, “This man welcomes sinners and eats with them.” Then Jesus told them this parable: “Suppose one of you has a hundred sheep and loses one of them. Doesn’t he leave the ninety-nine in the open country and go after the lost sheep until he finds it? And when he finds it, he joyfully puts it on his shoulders and goes home. Then he calls his friends and neighbors together and says, ‘Rejoice with me; I have found my lost sheep.’ I tell you that in the same way there will be more rejoicing in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous persons who do not need to repent. Luke 15:1-7

When my children were young, they would stay home with someone while I went shopping alone. However, one day I decided to take my four-year-old along with me to the mall. She was right beside me until I stopped to look at something, which seemed like just a few seconds; I turned around, and she was gone! I couldn't see her anywhere! Worst case scenarios raced through my head as I prayed to God, "Please help me to find her." As my heart raced while I frantically searched for her, suddenly a little girl jumps out from hiding inside a clothes rack! It was her! I rejoiced and gave thanks!

My love for her meant I'd search endlessly, calling her name, until she was safe in my arms. When someone close to us is lost, we cannot rest until they are found.

Our heavenly Father cares deeply for each one of us. He doesn't want any of us to be lost or separated from Him. Jesus says that he is the good shepherd who came to seek and to save lost sheep, to save you and me. He tells a story about leaving the ninety nine to find the one lost sheep and the joy when a lost sheep is found.

God is an incredible storyteller. He weaves themes and concepts together all the time, so it's no surprise that the Christmas story includes shepherds outside Bethlehem. God's story had woven its way through Bethlehem years before Jesus' birth through another shepherd boy who became a king named David.

"And there were shepherds living out in the fields nearby, keeping watch over their flocks at night."

No doubt, before they went to sleep, they counted their sheep to make sure every one of them was accounted for. Little did they know that an angel would appear announcing the birth of the Messiah! This baby lying in a manger had come to a world lost in sin, and to lost sheep like you and me.

As we follow Him, let us show that same passion as we seek the lost, especially during this Christmas season. Let us pray that God would send lost people our way and that we would be ready to share the love of Jesus with them!

Lynn Conlin

December 14

When God Comes, I Get Answers.

*Come to Me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls.
Matthew 11:28–29*

Why is it cloudy today? What happens when I flush the toilet? Why is the sky blue? What does “we can’t afford it” mean? Why do I have to go to school? Do squirrels have friends?

Life is full of questions!

And if you’re a parent, you are on the receiving end of a constant bombardment of them. Studies show that young children ask an average of 73 questions a day, and about 40,000 questions between ages 2 and 5! Some are easy to answer, some require a quick Google search, and others can leave you puzzled and astonished at your little one’s curiosity and deep thinking.

As we get older, our questions get heavier. Why did my baby die? Which job should I take? Why won’t you take away this depression? Can my marriage be saved? No Google search will give us a satisfying answer for these questions.

But God welcomes our questions. We won’t offend Him by asking them with doubt or even anger in our hearts. Just as children go to their parents with every little question, we should go to our Heavenly Father. He is the one who loves and redeems and provides and sustains. He is the source for your strength, hope, salvation, and life.

Lord God, thank You for being a loving Father who welcomes our questions. Help me to seek You with all my heart. Open my ears to hear Your voice, and my eyes to see You working in my life. Help me to trust You.

Hannah Lang

December 15

When God Comes, "Someday" Becomes "Today."

*On that day they will say to Jerusalem, "Do not fear, Zion; do not let your hands hang limp. The Lord your God is with you, the Mighty Warrior who saves. He will take great delight in you; in His love he will no longer rebuke you, but He will rejoice over you with singing."
Zephaniah 3:16-17*

We are a someday kind of people, aren't we? Someday I will clean out the garage, someday I will get in shape, someday I will talk to that person again, someday I will forgive that person, someday I will forgive myself, someday I will seek help, someday I will get that done, someday I will...But not God! He is a yesterday, today and tomorrow God. He was and is and is to come.

Today God equips.
Today God finishes.
Today God heals.
Today God helps.
Today God is faithful.
Today God unites.
Today God understands.
Today God reigns.
Today God rescues.
Today God saves.

There was a time when the people of God knew that a Savior was coming... someday. Today you get to celebrate that he not only came but he sacrificed His very life because of the incredible love he has for you! God takes great delight in you. Jesus came, died and rose again so by faith, "that day" when God rejoices over you is every day.

Dear God, thank you that You are a God who is listening to me today, who cares about the details of my life today, who is there for me today! Thank You for the many ways you continue to keep your promises yesterday, today and tomorrow too!

Andrea Hauser

December 16

When God Comes, I Can Face the Crazy.

But when the set time had fully come, God sent His Son, born of a woman, born under the law, to redeem those under the law, that we might receive adoption to sonship. Galatians 4:4

Have you ever had a Christmas celebration where it didn't go according to plan? Maybe plans had a change because someone got sick, or maybe company didn't come because of bad weather. Maybe the premier gift didn't come in time, or worse yet, it broke. Or, like a Christmas a decade ago, the soup for Christmas Eve curdled, and late at night I found myself in a drive-through looking for Christmas Eve dinner.

We all have our ideas of how things should work out. But if we go back to that first Christmas, there was plenty of crazy and chaos. Mary didn't get pregnant like she thought she would. She suddenly had a fiancé who wanted to divorce her. She fled to family and found that miraculously her barren aunt was pregnant while her uncle, the priest, had lost his voice. It was crazy that Jesus even showed up. Every person who was a part of the very first Christmas story had their life flipped upside down in some way, and maybe that is the point: to give us hope in the midst of the crazy and chaos.

Jesus didn't shy away from the crazy and the chaos. Instead he walked straight through it, endured it. He did the craziest thing of all by going to the cross for us in order to overcome all our chaos. Through a virgin mom, a humble birth, an unjust, painful death, and a glorious resurrection, Jesus brings peace to our chaos and hope for the crazy. No matter what you're facing, Christmas is about your Savior who came to save you from your past and your mistakes.

Jesus, thank you for coming into our world to be with us, to experience the chaos we experience, and yet to get above all the craziness. Thank you for being our Savior, our Redeemer, our King. Help us to find peace, hope and rest in You as we celebrate your birth.

Dan Hauser

December 17

When God Comes, I Examine My Heart and My Motives.

This, then, is how you ought to regard us: as servants of Christ and as those entrusted with the mysteries God has revealed. Now it is required that those who have been given a trust must prove faithful. I care very little if I am judged by you or by any human court; indeed, I do not even judge myself. My conscience is clear, but that does not make me innocent. It is the Lord who judges me. Therefore judge nothing before the appointed time; wait until the Lord comes. He will bring to light what is hidden in darkness and will expose the motives of the heart. At that time each will receive their praise from God. 1 Corinthians 4:1-5

My parents used to have a refrigerator magnet that said, "In the end, everything will be okay. If it is not okay, it is not the end." It was placed prominently in the middle of our refrigerator so that we would be able to see it everyday. We were a family of faith, so we knew what it meant: everything will be okay in the end because we will be with Jesus.

The passage for today reminds me of that magnet. Boy, do I mess up. My heart is hard. My motives are selfish. My pride gets in the way. If it was up to sinners to judge me, I'd be in a heap of trouble. But we have been given a gift in Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ did everything out of love for God and love for others. We may have confidence that in the end, everything will be okay because Jesus Christ has covered for us. He took on flesh and blood so that our hope was secured. He made the pathway clear for us to have a restored relationship with our Father in heaven. He, Jesus, makes my heart and motives pure. What a gift!

This Advent, may you celebrate the gift of the end...in Jesus!

Dear Jesus, thank you for making everything okay in the end through your life on earth, death on the cross and resurrection from the grave. You have made me whole and new and that is the best gift!

Melissa Luepke

December 18

When God Comes, Joy Comes To Life Deep In My Soul.

When Elizabeth heard Mary's greeting, the baby leaped in her womb, and Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit. "As soon as the sound of your greeting reached my ears, the baby in my womb leaped for joy. Blessed is she who has believed that the Lord would fulfill his promises to her!"
Luke 1:41, 44-45

Joy to the World! That's how the Christmas carol begins, but somehow, "feeling the joy" can be challenging. As we count down the days to Christmas this year, it feels a little different. There are political tensions, worries about disease, employee shortages and fewer items on store shelves. We are trying to get motivated and at times we feel like this Christmas has to be perfect to make up for the past year of not so perfect times. We want the best presents under the tree, the yummiest cookies on our plates, the most festive outfits to wear and the shiniest decorations in our houses. Maybe if we can just cover up the craziness, we'll find some joy.

It reminds me of the Peanuts Christmas special I used to watch as a kid. Lucy insisted Charlie Brown find the perfect tree for the Christmas pageant: "a big, shiny aluminum Christmas tree." Charlie Brown was stressed out by the thought of failing to meet Lucy's expectations, and it all felt like something was missing. Then Linus reminds everyone what the true meaning of Christmas is all about. He recites Luke 2: 8-14:

"And there were shepherds living in the fields nearby, keeping watch over their flocks by night. An angel of the Lord appeared to them and the glory of the Lord shone round about them. They were sore afraid, but the angel said to them, "Fear not. I bring you good tidings of great JOY. Today in the city of David a savior is born. He is Christ the Lord. Which shall be to all people. This will be a sign to you. You will find the baby wrapped in swaddling clothes living in a manger." Suddenly a great company of the heavenly host appeared with the angel, praising God and saying, Glory to God in the highest and on earth peace and good will toward men."

The good tidings of great joy: you will find a Baby, lying in a manger!

So, as we approach Christmas this season let's all remember what makes it a perfect, joy-filled Christmas. It's not the tree, the presents under it or even the type of gathering we have with our friends and family. Celebrating the birth of our Savior makes it perfect no matter what it looks like. We may not always "feel the joy," but we can have joy in all circumstances knowing that God is with us and he sent His son to take away our sins. When we grasp the deep love of God, in the face of baby Jesus, joy comes to life-deep in our soul.

Lord, you are my strength and my shield; my heart trusts in you, and you help me. My heart leaps for joy, and with my song I praise You. Psalm 28:7

Susan Muhl

December 19

When God Comes, Things Change.

Because Joseph her husband was faithful to the law, and yet did not want to expose her to public disgrace, he had in mind to divorce her quietly. But after he had considered this, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, "Joseph son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary home as your wife, because what is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. Matthew 1:19-20

If you think back over the years, some Christmases stand out, others not so much. Maybe you remember the electric baseball game you got as a 9-year-old, the Schwinn bicycle when you were 11, or maybe you were like me at age 13, when everything changed.

We moved into a new house around Christmastime. So that Christmas came with more excitement than what was under the tree. There was a ton of wonder, fear, and anxiety. It came with a whole new reality as everything changed. Everything!

Now, I am not claiming that year was the best Christmas. It was hard with a new home, new school, new families, plus I spent much of the first week in the hospital as I caught pneumonia during the move. But that Christmas was the most life changing Christmas!

Christmas is all about when God came, and when God came, He changed everything for everyone. The shepherds, they were in awe and couldn't help but talk about this Jesus. The wise men gave up months, maybe even years, and who knows how much money to find the King announced by a star and worship Him. Simeon came face to face with the 8-day old Jesus and said, "OK, my life is complete, now I can die in peace. For I have seen your promise come true with my own eyes."

My hope for you is that this would be a Christmas to remember. Not one where you just go through the motions and do the usual. Instead, may this be a Christmas where God comes and changes you.

Joseph had in mind to divorce Mary quietly, but God came and changed his mind. What changes is God working in your heart and mind these days? Jesus has come to fulfill God's plan and to win you forgiveness, freedom, and peace. May your Christmas be overwhelmed with Christ's Joy and Peace! May the Holy Spirit work in your life to make necessary changes in you so that you become the best of what God made you to be so that through you, people will see Jesus.

Heavenly Father, thank you for coming to change the world. Thank you for busting into our lives and flipping them upside down. Help us know that your Grace has come to bring us hope and peace.

Dan Hauser

December 20

When God Comes, Parents Teach Their Kids About Jesus.

Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength. These commandments that I give you today are to be on your hearts. Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up. Tie them as symbols on your hands and bind them on your foreheads. Write them on the doorframes of your houses and on your gates. Deuteronomy 6:5-9

There's a special magic surrounding Christmastime for children. But this season brings out a different feeling for many parents: anxiety! We feel the pressure to pack our schedules full of memory-making traditions. We put crazy expectations on ourselves to buy the perfect gifts and orchestrate special moments.

Even though my son won't remember his first Christmas, I confess that I may have already gone a little overboard with the matching Christmas pajamas, the gifts, and the plans to "do all the things..." For us Christian parents, we also feel the weight of responsibility to impress that "Jesus is the reason for the season." But how?

In this Deuteronomy 6 passage, God gives parents the vision for how to pass along faith to our children: it's as simple as seizing everyday moments and turning them into God-conversations.

Evidence of God's grace and reminders of His goodness are everywhere if you look for them! While playing in the snow, point out the beauty of God's creation. While getting nuggets in the drive through, thank God for providing the food and say a prayer to bless the restaurant workers. While wrapping gifts, make a list of the things God has already gifted you. When the stress of rushing to the next thing causes you to snap at each other, pray aloud and ask God for patience and grace.

When you point your children to Jesus during the mundane moments, you are helping them build a relationship with Him and investing in a faith that will last them a lifetime.

Dear God, thank you for the gift of my family. Help my children to know You more and more each day. Help them to love you with their whole hearts, and help me to disciple them every day. Amen.

Hannah Lang

December 21

When God Comes, We Bring Gifts

When they saw the star, they were overjoyed. On coming to the house, they saw the child with His mother Mary, and they bowed down and worshiped him. Then they opened their treasures and presented him with gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh. And having been warned in a dream not to go back to Herod, they returned to their country by another route. Matthew 2:10-12

Christmas is a time of “gift-giving.” In fact, the presents have become the primary focus of our Christmas celebration. If you “Google it,” you can learn about the history of gift-giving at Christmas. But what matters most is what is in your thoughts and your heart. “It’s the thought that counts” in gift-giving.

For the next few minutes, stop, breathe and honestly answer this simple question, “Why do I give gifts?” Is it out of duty or obligation, habit or tradition, love, or thankfulness for my family? It could be a combination of reasons.

The first “Christmas gifts” were given to Jesus. The Magi brought gold, frankincense and myrrh to honor and worship the King announced by a star. Now, we know a lot more about Jesus than they did. We can read the things he taught, see His compassion for people, and the way he stood up against hypocrisy. We know about the cross and the empty tomb. We know that God fulfilled His plan to forgive sins so that nothing could separate us from His love.

So, how will you honor and worship and thank God for Jesus this Christmas? What gifts do you have to offer God?

In the Christmas carol, the little drummer boy played his drum for Jesus. The shepherds rejoiced and told people what they had seen and heard. When I think about everything that went into those Maji seeing a star, trying to figure out what it meant, coming to the hypothesis that maybe this was “the star” that foretold the birth of a great king of the Jews, and organizing a trip to bring gifts. It is an incredible story and it has an incredible ending. “When they saw the star, they were overjoyed.” They bowed down and worshiped him. And they presented some amazing gifts.

What gift will you give this Christmas? It is a question worth pondering. Remember, the real story of Christmas isn’t about you, or the gifts you give. Christmas is about God, and His incredible love for you by coming into this messy, sinful, world to save you and to forgive you. The incredible Good News of Christmas is **you** get **the** gift.

God places a baby in your arms. God became human so you could see him, hear him, and come to believe in the depth of His love for you. God flips the whole “Christmas gift giving thing” upside down. He has a way of doing that!

Gracious heavenly Father, thank you for the gift of Jesus. Shape my heart and attitude about Christmas gifts. Fill me with gratitude for your love for me in Jesus. “What gifts have we to offer for all Thy love imparts, but that which Thou desirest, our humble thankful hearts.” (from the song All Good Gifts, Godspell)

David McClean

December 22

When God Comes, He Says, "Don't Be Afraid."

But the angel said to him: "Do not be afraid, Zechariah; your prayer has been heard." Luke 1:13

An angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, "Joseph son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary home as your wife." Matthew 1:20

But the angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary; you have found favor with God." Luke 1:13

But the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid. I bring you good news that will cause great joy for all the people." Luke 2:10

Fear: It's a big deal! Facing our fears and refusing to let them dominate or control our lives is one of the great challenges of life. What scares you these days? Sometime fears are obvious: things like snakes, spiders, heights, or public speaking. But our fears can also be deeply rooted, and they hit us like some deep, dark, internal wave that kicks in our "fight or flight" response.

Fear can also be exhausting. It can rob us of joy, damage relationships, and mess with our ability to sleep. But, fear can be a spiritual thing that challenges what we believe about people, who we can or should not trust, and what we believe about God.

So, what are you afraid of?

In the Christmas story the words are repeated, "Do not be afraid." When God comes, he doesn't want us to be afraid. In fact, he goes out of His way to start by telling us, "Do not be afraid." When God comes, it is not as a superhero blazing through the sky. He comes as a baby born to humble parents, lying in a manger.

God can be scary. Some people see him as a righteous judge who comes to "smite people" who disobey. But take a good look at the way God comes into the world to save it. He fulfills promises. He becomes human so we can see and hear and touch him. Rather than power up and demand allegiance, he teaches and heals and comforts and cares about individual people. He faces the ugliness of sin and is tortured, crucified, and abandoned. But he's not afraid.

Instead he says, "Father, forgive them." And, "It is finished." His message was, "I have come to forgive you so that nothing can separate you from God's love."

Our fears are sometimes real, sometimes imagined, some make perfect sense based on our life experiences, and some are irrational. But the fact is that our fears impact our lives.

God says, "Don't be afraid of me. Come to me!" God says, "I will put my Spirit in you. He is the Counselor, the Comforter and the power of God at work within you. Facing our fears sometimes requires owning them and seeking help. In the quiet of a stable, in the small town of Bethlehem, God came to earth to whisper in your ear, "Don't be afraid, I've got this. I have called you by name, you are mine."

Dear Lord, please calm my fears and bring to my heart and mind the Good News of Jesus' love in my life. Holy Spirit, help me to cling to your words, "Do not be afraid." Fill me with courageous peace.

David McClean

December 23

When God Comes, It's "Checkmate."

Now I (Joshua) am about to go the way of all the earth. You know with all your heart and soul that not one of all the good promises the Lord your God gave you has failed. Every promise has been fulfilled; not one has failed. Joshua 23:14

God's plan from the beginning was to crush Satan, to guarantee the forgiveness of sins and to re-establish a relationship with us by making us holy.

I am not much of a chess player, but I get the notion of "checkmate." It's when you corner your opponent's king so that escape is impossible. There was a time when I prided myself in being able to argue someone into a corner and convince them to believe in Jesus. Problem was, that strategy didn't make people believe in Jesus.

Christmas marks the beginning of God fulfilling every promise through the arrival of the promised Savior King, the Messiah. Jesus was born and His life had a singular focus. He came to fulfill God's plan to save us. He perfectly obeyed the Law. He didn't sin, not once. He demonstrated God's justice. He had compassion for those who were broken, and sick and guilt-ridden. Once they came to believe who he was, he set His sights on Jerusalem to die on a cross.

He had Satan "dead to right" and he came to bring peace between us and God. The disciples went out preaching the Good News and healing people and when they returned, Jesus said, "I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven."

Sins forgiven as He died to take the punishment for our sins. Death defeated by His resurrection. He came to forgive our sins and declare us to be holy. Jesus guarantees that nothing can separate us from the love of God! Check and Mate! The plan of God is complete!

What a miraculous and intriguing truth, God came to earth. God became human. God came into this messy, broken, sin-sick world in order to save you, and to save me. And by faith in Jesus, His holiness is mine! Done! Plan completed!

That's what I think about as the Christmas carols are sung, and I stand holding my candle singing, "Silent Night." Thank God for Jesus! Angels sang! Shepherds ran to see! Magi saw a star! Mary and Joseph held the son of God, the Messiah in their arms and marveled.

Merry Christmas!

David McClean

December 24

When God Comes, Love Gets Real.

This is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent His Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins. Dear friends, since God so loved us, we also ought to love one another. No one has ever seen God; but if we love one another, God lives in us and His love is made complete in us. 1 John 4:10-12

I love everything about Christmas—the angels, the shepherds, the manger. I love the lights and the decorations, the presents, the family-togetherness, the cookies, and the fact that it is the one time of the year you can find egg nog. I love the music of Christmas, and most of all, the mystery of God becoming human.

There's a lot to love about Christmas, but the real story is the love of God. It inspires me to love God more and stand in awe of His plan to save me.

There is so much "stuff" going on. Everything gets so busy that it is difficult to make this a time of spiritual renewal and a celebration of the relationship with God that Jesus came to give to us. So, how can we keep Jesus in Christmas?

Christmas reminds me that my faith in Jesus is rooted in God's story. It fortifies my faith, and reminds me why I am a Christian. God loves me so much that he took action to guarantee that nothing would separate me from His love.

There is all kinds of talk about what **love** is. Love is seen and heard and experienced in relationships. God so desperately wants us to know he loves us that he came to die for us to guarantee that our sins would be forgiven. For God, love is not some sappy, gushy or trite emotional response. For God, love is sacrificial and committed. God wanted His love to be real to us - so he came to earth. He became human so we could see him, hear him, watch him and experience His love as we love one another.

It's not that I love Christmas, but that God loves me. I get the gift! I get my sins are forgiven. I get Jesus in my life. I get the Holy Spirit at work to transform my heart and thoughts. I am loved by God, and Jesus is the proof.

Ah, dearest Jesus, Holy Child, make Thee a bed soft, undefiled within my heart that it may be a quiet chamber kept for Thee.

David McClean

December 25

When God Comes, Look Again.

A song by Aaron Levenhagen.

The story's read a thousand times, but the words are all you've heard. You've turned the page and read each line, but you've never understood. Do you see the star up in the sky and miss the light of hope again? Do you see a child and miss the Father of all men?

A carpenter, his gentle bride, a Baby in the hay. The shepherds and the wise men and the words the angels say. Do we find it so familiar that we miss our God's surprise? Oh, Emmanuel is right before your eyes!

Look again, look again into the manger, where all you've lost can suddenly be found! Look again, can't you see He's not a stranger? He's the Voice you've heard but seldom recognized, and on the breath of angel's wings comes the hope a Father's promise brings: Oh, my child, don't you see? You can be free, look again!

Though I search for You, I look and see that I'm the one who's lost. God wrapped in humanity, Lord, I can't believe the cost that You would pay to save me, though You know what no one sees. You love the man I am—not the man I want to be.

Don't you know? Haven't you heard? He walked this earth when all else failed. He bore the cross, let them drive the nails. It was worth it all just to hold your hand again. His nail-scarred feet on a dusty road mark a path ahead through days unknown. Come, follow Him, and He will lead you home!

In the quiet and the candlelight, I fall down on my knees. My confusion and my emptiness only show me of my need. If I give up on my searching, can it be that I'll be found in Your open arms where I'll be safe and sound?

Look again, look again into the manger, where all you've lost can suddenly be found! Look again, can't you see He's not a stranger? He's the Voice you've heard but seldom recognized, and on the breath of angel's wings comes the hope a Father's promise brings: Oh, my child, don't you see? You can be free, look again!

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December 26

When God Comes, People Need to Know.

When the angels had left them and gone into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, "Let's go to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has told us about." So they hurried off and found Mary and Joseph, and the baby, who was lying in the manger. When they had seen him, they spread the word concerning what had been told them about this child, and all who heard it were amazed at what the shepherds said to them. But Mary treasured up all these things and pondered them in her heart. The shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all the things they had heard and seen, which were just as they had been told. Luke 2:15-20

"They spread the word concerning what had been told them about this child." People are searching for meaning and purpose, they are looking for something real. Will they see something real in you?

When God Comes, we change: we are forgiven and live in grace that is all powerful. God came: that's what we believe about Christmas. And Jesus changes everything - he turns our understanding of God upside down. He shows us what love is really all about as he gives his life to save ours.

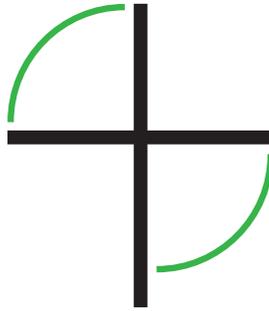
Pray for the people God places in your life.

Build a relationship with people who need God to come to them. You never know when God will come to them through you. So be intentional. You are part of the Movement of God's love on earth.

The shepherds were overjoyed! They spread the news! Pray for the Holy Spirit to let joy overflow in your life!

Heavenly Father, throughout the Bible, there is this phrase, "then they will know that I am the Lord their God." Once again, this Christmas season you have come to me and spoken truth to me. I believe Jesus is the promised Messiah, the Son of God and my Savior. I know, you are a God of love and forgiveness. You continue to come and transform hearts and lives. People need to know! You have come to me and changed my life. You have set my heart free. My prayer is simple: Use me. Use me to love people as you love me. In Jesus' name. Amen.

David McClean



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