

Thy King and Thy Kingdom Come!



First Presbyterian Church, Starkville

2018 Daily Devotional for Advent and Christmas Day

December 2 - December 25, 2018

Thy King and Thy Kingdom Come!

**Daily written devotions and prayers from church family ministry leaders,
and art by some of our FPC children –
based on Holy Scripture from the Book of Isaiah Chapters 9, 11, and 12.**

**Advent and Christmas Day 2018
December 2 – December 25**

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Introduction and Invitation to Prepare and Pray for the Coming of The King and His Kingdom.

No wonder Isaiah is often called the *New Testament* in the Old! We find the Good News of Christmas, as well as Good Friday, Easter, *and* the Second Coming and Eternal Kingdom all in Isaiah. Even more, God's Good News in Isaiah says the Savior King and his Kingdom will bring saving light and grace not just to the Jews but also to all gentiles who will come to Him.

Over 700 years before Jesus' birth, the prophet Isaiah proclaimed the LORD's Word of, yes, impending judgment on Israel and Judah but, further, of Good News. Isaiah prophesied remarkable redemptive hope for Judah, for all Israel, and – amazing grace – for all people and nations. Specifically, the Good News centered on a coming King and Kingdom: the promised Messiah in the line of King David (the son of Jesse) would be born in Divine Glory, and He would establish an everlasting Messianic Kingdom.

Nearly eight centuries after Isaiah's first prophecies, another prophet – John the Baptist – heralded the imminence of the prophesied King and Kingdom. “ In those days, John the Baptist came preaching in the Judean desert, *‘Repent, for the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand!’*” [Matthew 3:1-2]

Then Jesus came to be baptized by John and anointed by the Holy Spirit as Messiah, God's Son, and our Savior. Jesus is the King and THE KING.

Jesus, in turn, began his public ministry and soon made clear that the Kingdom He was proclaiming and bringing as Messiah was nothing less than the Kingdom of Heaven: the Kingdom of his heavenly Father. So Jesus called his disciples then – and Jesus calls you and me now – to prepare and pray for God's Kingdom to reign *on earth* and *in us*. The Second Petition of what we call “The Lord's Prayer” is “*Thy Kingdom come.*” [Matthew 6:10a; Luke 11:2b]

“**Advent**” (derived from the Latin) means “**coming.**” During Advent, we pray for the Holy Spirit to prepare us truly to be ready for:

- (1) The celebration of Jesus' *First Coming* as the King born to us – Christmas; and
- (2) His *Second Coming* – when Jesus will return as the King of kings to consummate his Kingdom to the glory of his Father.

This Advent Season 2018, I am delighted to present to you this FPC Daily Devotional. For each day in Advent and for Christmas Day, you will find a reading from Isaiah Chapter 9, 11 or 12, an FPC ministry leader's devotional and prayer inspired by the given Scripture, , and – for many of the days – art from FPC children inspired by the Scripture.

I pray that the God will use this devotional to speak to you each day of the season. May He lead you to prepare and pray with growing faith and joy for his Return and his Kingdom. May you each day pray for Isaiah's hope, what Christmas inaugurated, and what Jesus will fulfill eternally:

*Thy King
and
Thy Kingdom
Come!*

Yours in the King and his Kingdom,
Martin Lifer
Pastor, FPC Starkville

First Sunday in Advent, December 2, 2018 – Jack Atkins

Isaiah 9:1-2

“But there will be no gloom for her who was in anguish. In the former time, He brought into contempt the land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali, but in the latter time He has made glorious the way of the sea, the land beyond the Jordan, Galilee of the nations.

*The people who walked in darkness
have seen a great light;
those who dwelt in a land of deep darkness,
on them has light shone”*

[Editor’s Note: Jack’s personal confession to me as his pastor provides a prelude not only to his own devotional but also, most likely, for each author and their work that follow. Jack writes, “How can I consider the glory and light of the Lord? I am so very inadequately designed for such a thing. I don’t feel worthy, and everything feels trivialized when I try. However, it’s a great way to start my day.”]

The beginning of Isaiah 9 paints a picture of someone crying out in anguish and the promise of release. A comparison is made between the lands of Zebulun and Naphtali, whose lands were conquered by an Assyrian king and their citizens enslaved, and the land beyond the Jordan, Galilee of the nations where in a latter time will be made glorious. I believe the comparison was made to clarify if one king came in a former time to enslave the people then another prophesized King will come in a latter time to free them. This is the promise of Jesus Christ who was to come 700 years after this prophecy. Jesus, who is the Son of God, came to us through his mercy and grace to take our sin upon Himself and be sacrificed to save us all. A promise kept.

A light **seen** in the darkness! Throughout my life’s darkest hours, my Father through his grace and love provided for me a light to guide my way. Not only does that light give me direction, the light is there to provide for me a focus point, a goal and the assurance of safety in Him. Jesus Christ came into this world to save me, because He chose me. His light also shines **on** me, bringing me into focus and everything that I have done and maybe everything that I am capable of doing. It’s possible that is why most people choose to dwell in darkness, they can’t stand to look at themselves out of shame in which pride keeps them immobile. Also, not only can I see myself but others as well; my whole world is illuminated. I know that I need to remove the log from my eye before I tell my brother about the speck in his, but if I see him stumble and fall then I have been given sight to catch him. Jesus came into this world to lead people to his Father, and so will I – as Jesus Himself leads me.

Prayer:

Dear Father, Thank You that You have given me your Light – Your Son, my Savior, Jesus – to follow. Thank You for your Light, so that I may not get lost in darkness but, in Him, I may see myself and prepare my soul, so that You may say, “Well done, my good and faithful servant.” In Jesus’ Name, Amen.



James Rackley

Monday, December 3, 2018 – Will Martin

Isaiah 9:3

*“You have multiplied the nation;
You have increased its joy;
they rejoice before you as with joy at the harvest,
as they are glad when they divide the spoil.”*

In this Scripture, Isaiah is prophesying the birth of Jesus and what an impact He will have on the world and its people! With the coming of the gospel comes an overwhelming sense of joy! Such joy, in this particular Scripture, is compared to the joy of the harvest, only after one has gone through the trials of the growing season.

The Christmas season is certainly full of joy and happiness as we remember the wonderful gift of Jesus. For many, it has been a year of trials and tribulations, but as it comes to a close this Christmas season, we can all find rest and great joy in Jesus, just as one bringing in the harvest.

Prayer:

Dear God, we thank You so much for this beautiful Christmas season and the birth of Your Son Jesus. Please help us to stay focused on the true meaning of Christmas in which we can always find joy and peace. In Jesus' Name, Amen

Elle Lacey

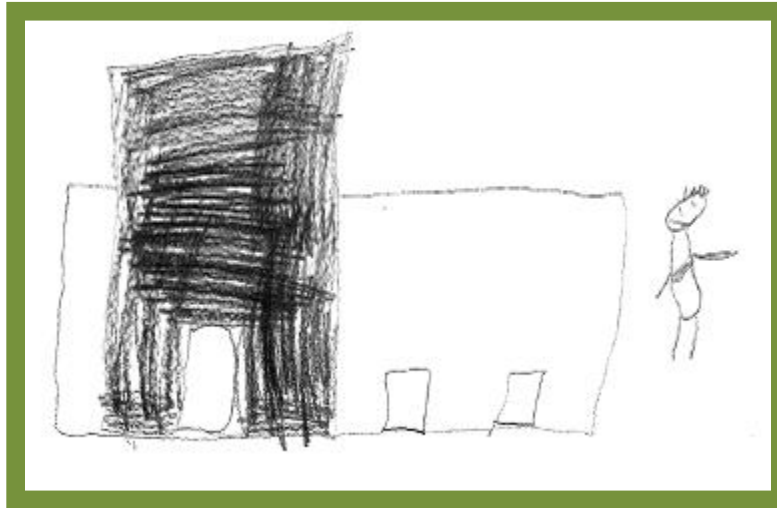


Audrey Walters

Tuesday, December 4, 2018 – Peggy Johnson

Isaiah 9:4

*"For the yoke of his burden,
and the staff for his shoulder,
the rod of his oppressor,
you have broken as on the day of Midian."*



Tanner Chance

Isaiah 9:4 builds on the idea of the joy (v.3) that will be felt by the people of God with the promised Advent of the Messiah (v.6). The *yoke*, the *bar*, and the *rod*—all symbols of the oppression inflicted on Israel during the period of foreign domination—will be shattered at His coming. Isaiah's allusion to *the day of Midian's defeat* is key to understanding verse 4. In Gideon's day Israel was controlled by the Midianites. Their enormous, mighty army oppressed the Israelites, whose own army, small and weak, was no match for their power. Judges 6 and 7 recounts how Gideon, with only a handful of troops—but with the power of God—conquered the Midianites and expelled them from the land.

The story of Midian's miraculous defeat speaks volumes to us as believers in God in Christ and His power. In our own day, when believers seem so outnumbered by those who do not express a living faith in Christ, we can look back to the miracle of Gideon and his 300 men. When the odds are against us, when our burdens seem more than we can bear, when we seem outnumbered by a mighty army against us, the Messiah shatters the yoke of oppression and brings us to Himself.

Prayer:

O mighty God, I praise You for the joy that comes to us with the Advent of Your Son on earth. Inspire us to act in Your Name. Instill in your people the hope and the wonder of the Season. In Jesus' precious name, Amen.

Isaiah 9:5

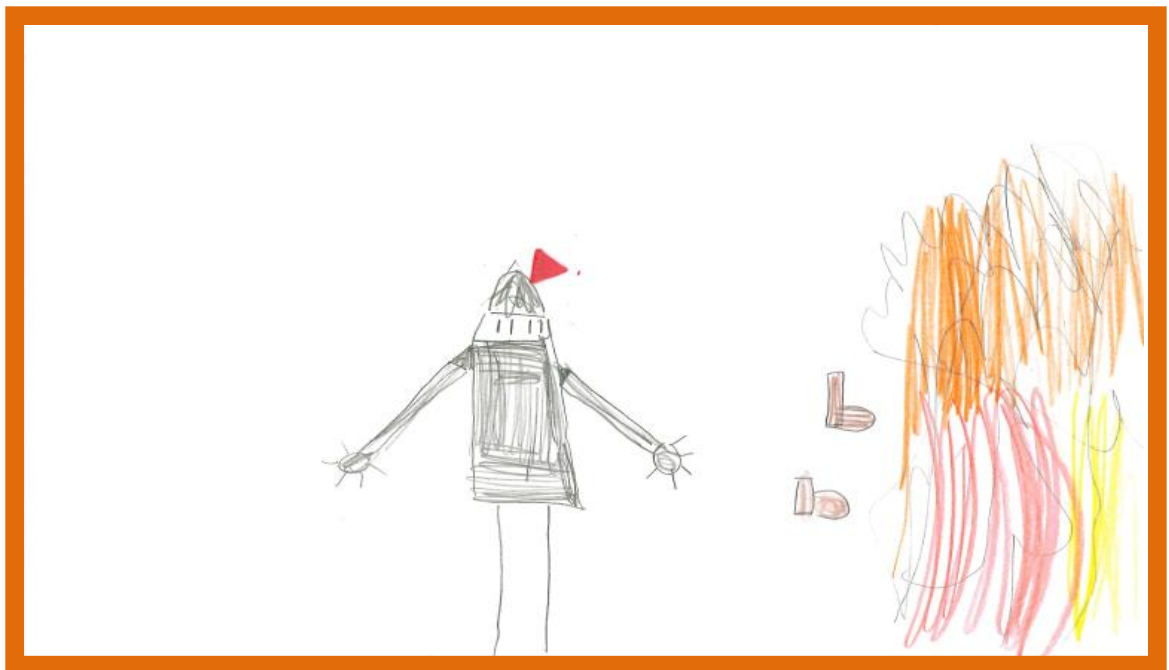
*“For every boot of the tramping warrior in battle tumult
and every garment rolled in blood
will be burned as fuel for the fire.”*

Isaiah’s prophecy of the Advent of the Messiah in this passage is transitional or connecting in that it moves from physical warring of Israel against the nations to the spiritual war against sin/Satan by God. Isaiah is describing to Israel and to us the future when all warfare will cease and there will be peace. The instruments of war will be destroyed; the litter from the battle fields “...will be burned as fuel for the fire.” This reminds us of Micah 4:3 “...they shall beat their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks.” However, for this to happen there will have to be a redeemer because the people cannot depend on their own strength but must turn to God. Historically, when Israel trusted God they were victorious in battle but when they did not, they lost. So, who will lead the spiritual war against sin and Satan? Isaiah sets the stage for the answer: this Redeemer who is prophesied is the Messiah of God.

As I meditate on this passage, which I find to be very difficult but important, I can “hear” the LORD telling us to put away our struggles and strivings, put our trust in God, and prepare our hearts to receive peace and joy with God and His people: the Advent of Jesus, the Prince of Peace.

Prayer:

Holy God, we pray that the true peace of God will calm us and prepare our hearts by the indwelling of the Holy Spirit to anticipate and receive the Advent of our Savior, Jesus Christ. In His Name we pray. Amen



Carson Mullen

Thursday, December 6, 2018 – Peyton Fandel

Isaiah 9:6a

“For to us a child is born, to us a son is given,”

Last November, I was given the best news I had ever heard: “Peyton, I’m pregnant.” I remember the emotions that overwhelmed me for weeks and weeks. I cried tears of joy and shook with fear and anxiousness. I had to keep a secret that I wanted to shout on the mountaintops. But then the excitement when I finally got to tell everyone we were going to have a child was a feeling like none other.

Imagine the feeling Isaiah had as he was able to prophesy from the Lord that a child, The Lord’s child, will come to this world and be OUR king!

Fast forward to 8 months later as I stand pacing in the delivery room waiting for this child to arrive. As the doctor revealed that we had a son and I held him in my arms, the emotions that ran over me will never be recreated. It was in that moment that I realized what true unconditional love was. I knew that there was in no way anything that Winn could do that would change my love for him. Now as we prepare to celebrate the birth of our Savior Jesus Christ, be reminded of how much the Lord loves you. He sent his ONLY Son into this world, knowing that he would die a painful death as the perfect sacrifice to fulfill the law, because He LOVES YOU!

Prayer:

Dear Lord,

May we continually be reminded of how much You love us, that You gave Your only Son to be a sacrifice for sinners like us. May we be more like Isaiah and proclaim to the world that Jesus is Lord of all. Amen.



Lucille Downey

Friday, December 7, 2018 – Kirk Kinard

Isaiah 9:6b

“. . .And the government shall be upon His shoulder.”

Standing on the Shoulders of Giants

As I reflect on this message from the prophet Isaiah, I am drawn to this past election cycle and how critical the message to “go vote!” seemed. Everywhere I looked there were advertisements and personal testimony on the importance of exercising the right to vote. But now as I look to the Advent and Christmas season, I wonder if people realize the importance to vote with God: to pray and to go before the Lord of lords and King of kings with our worries, pleadings, and praises. The Word of Truth sets up the newborn Christ as the one upon whose shoulders governments will lie. We must also build our lives on top of the firm foundation that Jesus Christ provides.

Sir Isaac Newton said of his great accomplishments in mathematics and physics, “If I have seen further it is by standing on the shoulders of giants.” There is no better vantage point for wisdom and understanding than the shoulders of the living God. We as Christians cannot abstain from involvement in politics, and we cannot default to one rigid viewpoint or another. The season of Advent is a remembrance of the great arrival of the God-man, Jesus Christ, into our world. It is my hope that through prayer and supplication for political wisdom this particular season will bring another advent—the teachings of Christ entering into our governmental leadership.

Prayer:

Father, we come before You today praising You and rejoicing. Your Word to us is a steady hand in the midst of uncertain seas. We give thanks for Your Son, Jesus Christ, and His sovereignty over us and all the world’s nations. Though He will rule with a rod of iron, we do not fear the comforting hand of our good Shepherd. In Christ’s Name we pray, Amen.



Tucker Chance

Saturday, December 8, 2018 – Wallace Cade

Isaiah 9:6c (Wonderful Counselor)

“ . . . And his name shall be called Wonderful, Counselor . . . ”



Advent is a very special part of our Christmas Season where we set aside and focus on the birth of Jesus Christ the Messiah and what He taught us during his thirty-three years on earth. Isaiah, the Prophet, wrote his prediction of the coming of the “**Wonderful Counselor**” (Isaiah 9:6) 800 hundred years before the birth of Jesus Christ. This was a period of time when the Hebrew people were going through turbulent times and needed hope for the future. Isaiah called the coming Jesus Christ our “**Wonderful Counselor**” (Isaiah 9:6). The word **Wonderful** in this passage literally means

“incomprehensible.” The new Messiah will cause us to be “full of wonder.” Jesus demonstrated His wonderfulness in various ways including the virgin birth, His power to heal, His amazing teaching, His perfect life and His resurrection from the dead. Jesus taught us to Love one another and to do good. The second part of the Messiah’s title is the word **Counselor**. Jesus is a wise counselor and does not need any testimony about mankind, for he knew what was in each person (John 2:25). He is able to advise His people thoroughly because He is qualified in ways higher than any human counselor. His wonderful counsel comes through His Word and His people. The more we are immersed in Scripture and in community with other believers, the more clearly we can discern the mind of Christ. Jesus always knows what we are going through, and He always knows the right course of action (Hebrews 4:15–16). There is also a beautiful song “**His Name is Wonderful**” that reflects; He is the Great Shepherd, Rock of all Ages, Almighty God is He, Jesus my Lord. This is a very good song to listen to and meditate on during this season.

We can’t call Him **Wonderful Counselor** if we do not embrace His wisdom for our salvation, our family, our finances, our future and everything in our lives. The biblical idea of counsel involves both careful listening and clear advising. It describes someone who is wise; someone who really knows how to live and will share that knowledge and this can only come from Jesus Christ our Savior. This season is a wonderful time to reflect on **Jesus Christ our Wonderful Counselor** so we can face the problems of the world and place hope in the promises he has made. I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come Nor any other created things, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Jesus Christ our Lord! (Romans 8:38-39)

Prayer:

Christ Jesus, may your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in Heaven. To God be the glory for this Scripture in Isaiah which tells us of the confident hope and revelation of the coming (Advent) of the promised Son of David and King of Israel who brings his saving Good News not only to Israel but also to all the nations. Wonderful Counselor rule in us with fairness and justice that righteousness may be vindicated and evil overcome. Holy is your name. In Jesus Christ’s name, Amen.

The Second Sunday in Advent, December 9, 2018 – Ernie George

Isaiah 9:6c (Mighty God)

“ . . . And his name shall be called ...Mighty God ...”

Reflection: How the promised Son/Messiah (Jesus) was and is called Mighty God and is fully divine.

This is one of many passages in which the name of God is applied to the Messiah. This denotes a divine nature. He is God, one with the Father. This is the promise the whole world has been awaiting. Born as the poorest of the poor to reign over heaven and earth. During the still of the night, the light of the world comes to us.

As children, we were taught by our parents and teach our children to honor and love our Savior. There is no time of year like the Christmas season of which we all have many fond memories of celebrating with our families in a oneness of faith and love remembering the Messiah's birth.

Prayer:

Heavenly Father, we give thanks for our many blessings and ask You to prepare our hearts and minds to fully experience your love and to share it with others. We pray for peace that only You can create.



Lilian Downey

Monday, December 10, 2018 – Ben Jackson

Isaiah 9:6c (Everlasting Father)

“ . . . And his name shall be called . . . Everlasting Father . . . ”

The coming One, of whom Isaiah foretells, would eventually earn glorious new names. And He *will* answer Israel's particular needs and longings, rescuing them from deep darkness to promised light, from burdened step to bounding, from war-stained turmoil to joyous harmony (See Is. 9:1-5). The coming One will answer the particular needs of Abraham's actual (expectant Hebrews) and spiritual children (reflecting Christians). As “Everlasting Father”, through the second person of the Trinity (the Son), the One will answer our need for a father who does not fade on us, as did Adam and every subsequent head. He will answer our need for a father who will never fail us, in spite of Adam and every subsequent father.

I have a difficult time seeing the Person of the Father as so unified with the Person of the Son that his heart toward me is every bit as gracious and tender as Jesus is toward me (by the Person of the Spirit). My own imperfect, finite, dying father may have something to do with this. Yet as Jesus unveils the Father most explicitly, Jesus shows me fatherly love that none of my earthly fathers can, past and present, and he will do so without end. I am thankful that Jesus' undying fatherly love is on display in his first coming. This reality makes me desire to peer freshly into and delight in the Everlasting Father's coming over Advent season.

Prayer:

Perfectly Triune God, thank You for becoming my Father instead of leaving me to my earthly fathers! Disrupt my belief that You are limited to my earthly, finite father's example, and convince me of your undying, perfect fatherly love. Lead me and my spiritual siblings into excited anticipation of your return in Jesus! Amen.



Edie Kemp

Tuesday, December 11, 2018 – Janice Kinard

Isaiah 9:6c (Prince of Peace)

“ . . . And his name shall be called . . . Prince of Peace.”



I am intrigued by earthly royalty. I learn about their families, where they come from, their ability to “rule” and their God-given destiny to serve their people and their country. God’s Word given through Isaiah decreed His royal destiny for his people and his world – a Son and His Name shall be Prince of Peace.

Advent pulls me away from the world. I move things around my home to make room for the Prince of Peace’s birthday. I pull out special decorations. I cook special food. I wear beautiful colorful Christmas clothing. I have the men in my house string up outside lights. All of this effort to celebrate the Prince of Peace Who came and brings peace to the world.

Prayer:

Father in Heaven, hallowed be thy name. You are the maker of heaven and earth. You’ve got the whole world in your hands and You decreed Your Son’s destiny as the Prince of Peace. He is the perfect gift. Thank You, Father. We annually celebrate the marvelous truth that Christ is Your Son and He is the Prince of Peace for all men, women and children.
Amen

Wednesday, December 12, 2018 – Edward Kemp

Isaiah 9:7a

“Of the increase of his government and of peace there will be no end.”

How frequently in today’s self-gratifying and over-hyperbole society is the term “forever” used? So often, in fact, that the meaning and impact of that word has lost its effect. Seldom a day goes by when we aren’t inundated with a marketing ploy to “buy a gift which will last forever”, “create memories which will last to eternity” or from sports announcers or commentators that we are witnessing the “greatest play in the history of sports” or the “greatest player ever to play the game.” Take a moment and think about eternity and what forever really means.

In today’s devotional, the passage foretells about our great King and the Prince of Peace- Jesus. His reign and rule (government) will be all-encompassing and everlasting. And as His perfect will and order is executed, likewise, perfect peace will be shared and enjoyed. Jesus’ authority over all “things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities” and installation of His perfect peace that will last until eternity should give us hope, comfort, and peace. Ask yourself today if your heart is set on temporal things that the world is selling or on eternal things which Jesus promises.

Prayer:

Lord Jesus, Thank You for coming to this earth to live and die so You, and You alone, can be our Perfect King and Prince of Peace. May we rest in your power and promise from today until eternity.



Ella Walters



Audrey Walters

Isaiah 9:7b

*“on the throne of David and over his kingdom, to establish it
and to uphold it with justice and with righteousness
from this time forth and forevermore.”*

I love the Book of Isaiah, and Advent is an especially good time to read Isaiah, because this book is so full of powerful prophecy of the Messiah to come. And after all, Christmas is all about the birth of Jesus the Messiah. Isaiah 9:7b is a portion of one of the Messianic prophecies in which God promises to send His Son and that He will reign on David's throne. The passage reads ... **“on the throne of David and over his kingdom, to establish it and to uphold it from this time forth and forever.”**

In this portion of the passage, Isaiah asserts that the Messiah to come will ascend to the throne of King David and rule over his kingdom forever. This reinforces the promise God made to David in 2 Samuel 7:16. *“And your house and your kingdom shall be made sure forever before me. Your throne shall be established forever.”* The connection between these promises shows God's consistency through time and tells a portion of His plan (“a mystery hidden in God”) revealed by Paul in Ephesians 3:9-10. *“and to bring to light for everyone what is the plan of the mystery hidden for ages in God who created all things, so that through the church the manifold wisdom of God might now be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly places.”*

For us today, it should help us realize that God was working His eternal plan all those years before to bring His Son Jesus – at just the right time – to Earth to be “the Way” of salvation for all mankind. This promise was accomplished and as it promised His kingdom will be forever. We are part of that “forever”. Thank God!



This Scripture is a very famous one and has been known by Christians for thousands of years. It is one of the foundations of Christianity because the reality is that God has accomplished this prophecy through Jesus' life, death and resurrection.

As we meditate on Isaiah 9:7b during Advent we should realize that God was preparing for Jesus' coming for eternity and that he gave prophecy such as this for our benefit, so we would know He prepared it. We can also have faith and confidence in the Scriptures because God foretold it in advance.

Finnley Murdock

Prayer:

God, we praise You today for your great love for us that You planned not only Jesus' coming but that we would know that Jesus' reign would be forever as promised to David.

Oh Jesus, at Advent this year give us a renewed, deepened understanding of your eternal power and reign! Amen.

Isaiah 9:7c

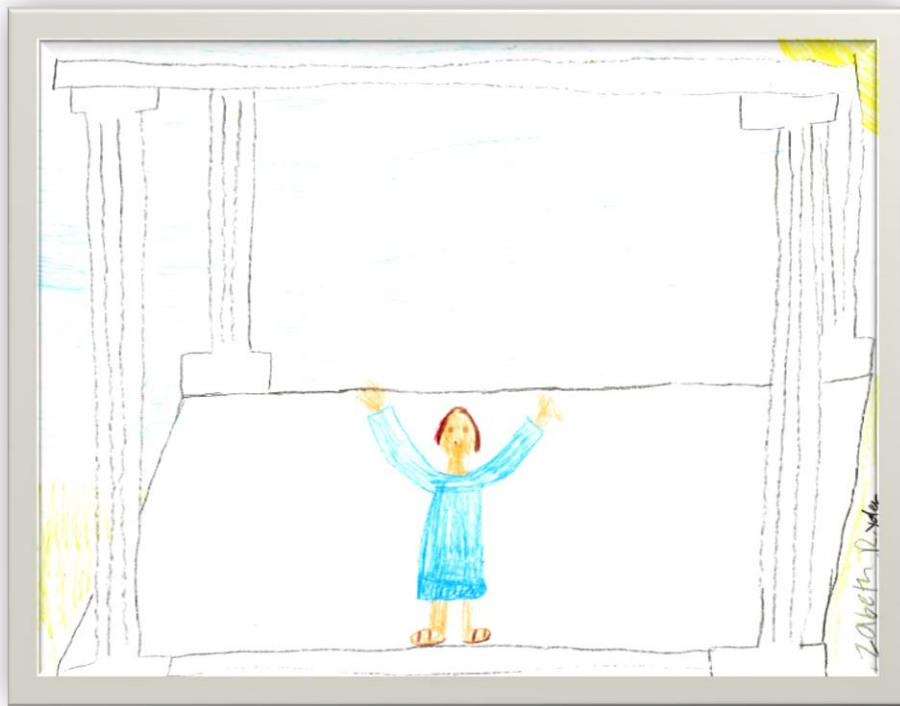
“The zeal of the LORD of hosts will do this.”

Some governments rise, some governments fall, but the greatness and power of the Lord's government will know no end. He is the ultimate King, the Prince of Peace, on whose shoulders we are carried. The throne of David on which he sits, is a direct reference to the Messiah coming from the lineage of David. God's passion and faithfulness to His people are engaged to perform whatever He has purposed and promised; his zeal, which is no other than his fervent flaming love, will move him to it, and is effectual to accomplish it. His zeal or fervent love to His Son, which is his ultimate end in all his works of nature, providence, and grace, will engage him to fulfil whatever is foretold concerning the birth of Christ, and redemption by him, and his offices and kingdom.

This Scripture reaffirms the magnificence of our God. For something to have no end and no boundaries is truly awe-inspiring, especially when that something is His love for His people. He did everything for us by sending His only Son to die for our sins and He never intends to cease doing so for us. Over the past year and a half, he has blessed our family to no end and we couldn't possibly imagine what he had in store for us before that. He has proven how much He loves us with all our faults and mistakes, and will continue to love us forever, because it is with that same love and fervor that we are to love Him back.

Prayer:

Dear Lord, You love us and we thank You for that. With all that we see and do, we know that You are there to lead us and guide us in your light. We ask that You watch over us and protect us as we go forward to spread the good news of Your Son, Jesus Christ. Be with us during this season as we celebrate your love. Amen



Elizabeth Ryder

Isaiah 11:1-2

*“There shall come forth a shoot from the stump of Jesse,
and a branch from his roots shall bear fruit.*

*And the spirit of the LORD shall rest upon him,
the spirit of wisdom and understanding,
the spirit of counsel and might,
the spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the LORD”*

Nearly 700 years before the birth of Christ, the prophet Isaiah shared some good news with God's people. The Messiah was coming, and more specifically, he would be a descendant of Jesse, King David's father. The metaphor that Isaiah used for Jesse's lineage is that of a stump – the dead remnants of what was once a living tree. Isaiah says that new growth will one day spring forth from the stump of Jesse's family tree and that the new growth will bear life-giving fruit. This message would have encouraged the people of God who were anxiously awaiting the arrival of their Messiah.

This Advent season, as we expectantly wait for the coming of our Lord, it is important for us to remember that God has the ability to bring forth new growth from dead wood. He has done it before with Jesus and He can do it again with us. The parts of our life that are dead or decaying with sin and neglect don't have to stay that way forever. As we prepare our hearts for Jesus Christ to enter our sinful world, we should examine our own lives and identify the branches that need pruning and new growth. Let us offer those areas up to our Lord, who brings forth life-giving fruit from dead wood.



Ann Carlton Holditch

Prayer:

God of New Life, help us to prepare for the arrival of our Savior by identifying the areas in our life that need new growth. This Advent season, we ask You to bring forth good fruit for us and those around us. Amen.

Third Sunday in Advent, December 16, 2018 – Cal Rackley

Isaiah 11:3-4

“And his delight shall be in the fear of the LORD.

*He shall not judge by what his eyes see,
or decide disputes by what his ears hear,*

*but with righteousness he shall judge the poor,
and decide with equity for the meek of the earth;
and he shall strike the earth with the rod of his mouth,
and with the breath of his lips he shall kill the wicked.”*

In these Scriptures, Isaiah prophesies about the qualities of the Messiah to come. As disciples of Christ who are filled with the Holy Spirit, we are called to live lives that reflect these qualities. The Spirit encourages us to respond to this clear picture of the Christian walk that God provides.

The fear of the Lord is a concept that has always interested me. If God loves me and sacrificed His Son to save me, why should I fear Him? God's Word tells us that we should not live in fear but rather delight in the awesomeness of God. If we are truly filled with the Spirit, we will naturally fear disobedience to God. Rather than dwelling on this fear, we should rejoice that it is proof of God's presence in our lives.

As we celebrate this Advent season and await the arrival of our precious Savior, let us be reminded that God sent His Son not only to atone for our sins but also to provide the example of living according to God's call.

Father, as we celebrate the coming of Your Son, we are thankful for the fulfillment of Isaiah's prophesy. Continue to bring us back to the path which You have set for us, and forgive us when we stray. We rejoice for your constant presence in our lives and the gift of the example set by Jesus. Amen!



Anna Rackley

Isaiah 11:5

*“Righteousness shall be the belt of his waist,
and faithfulness the belt of his loins.”*



Collier Martin

I wear a belt. I have always worn a belt. It may seem strange that I tell you this fact about my attire. Please allow me explain. My belts are of strong leather construction with a robust buckle. In my line of work I find it necessary carry a few things that are always handy to have. A pair of pliers, many keys, a pocket knife, a wallet, a cell phone, and sometimes a sidearm. My belts hold these tools of my trade close to me and are touched by me many times a day. It is reassuring to me to know that they are close at hand and will help me perform my task.

Isaiah tells, in Chapter 11 Verse 5, how the coming Messiah will reign. He will always be a righteous and just King. We also should hold those virtues close to our core, just as my belt holds tools that I use daily. We should keep these attributes of Christ handy and use them daily. We should pray daily and study His Word so that our faith is bound as if it were wrapped with a strong belt and cinched tight with a buckle.

Prayer:

Father, I pray that You will teach us to be righteous and just with our fellow man. Help us to hold your teaching close and use them daily. Most of all I pray that You will teach us to number our days and give us hearts of wisdom. In Jesus' Name, Amen

Isaiah 11:6

*“And the wolf shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the young goat,
and the calf and the young lion and the fattened calf together;
and a little child shall lead them.”*

The image of these animals – which are normally considered hunter and prey, menace and innocence, living together in peace and rest together – is at odds with the understanding we have of the order of nature in our world. This scene depicts trust, safety, contentment and relationships grown from intimacy. None would allow a child into the world of danger associated with wolves, leopards and lions; yet here we see him, a small boy, as the one caring for this assortment of both feral and domestic animals. In these relationships there is no unsatisfied hunger, no danger, and no fear. Here we have evidence of plenty and abundance.

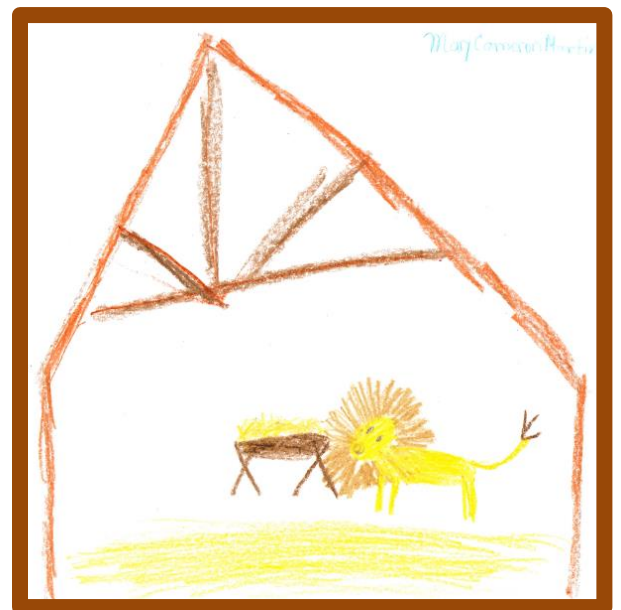
This time of Advent reminds us of the One for Whom we wait, our Creator and Redeemer. The infant Jesus was born to conquer the sin of the world which separates us from God. He will redeem all the earth, and overcome the sin which causes destruction and death in the earth. He has overcome death and darkness through His identity as Life and Light. And He, our Savior, does this through his offer of love and salvation for each one of us, individually, intimately overcoming our separation from God through his adoption of each believer into his household. Oh, Lord Jesus, come! We wait with anticipation and joy for your coming, our Lord, our Savior, our Prince of Peace!

Prayer:

Dear Lord of Life, we thank You for your willingness to come to us as a child, to show us the only way we are reconciled with God through You. We thank You for the burden You bore of our sin, which paid the penalty we could never escape without your grace. We rejoice in your victory over death and sin. Let us never lose the awe of your magnificence and mercy for each of us, your redeemed. Amen.



Cline Kemp



Mary Cameron Martin

Wednesday, December 19, 2018 – Glenda Clark

Isaiah 11:7

*“And the cow and the bear shall feed; their young ones shall lie down together:
and the lion shall eat straw like the ox.”*

Introductory Explanation

Those who are weak and those who are strong can come together as one in God’s holy world, teaching each other to live together in harmony.

Personal Reflection

Christ wants us all to love each other as He loves us.

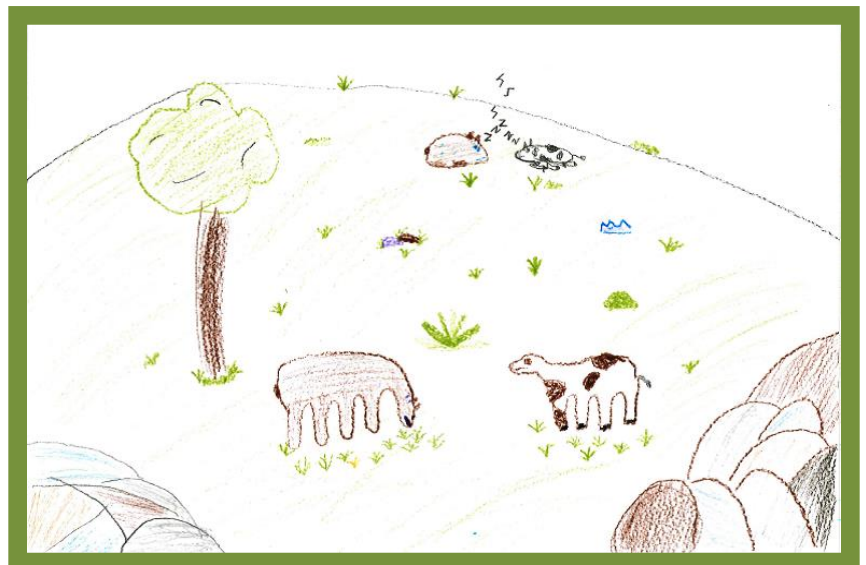
Prayer

Heavenly Father, as we are all different, we as Christians come before You this Advent season thankful that You love us no matter who we are. We know this is the most beautiful time of the year. You were born, You died, and You rose again so that all can live forever in your wonderful kingdom together. In Jesus’ Name, amen.



Elizabeth Fair

Hayes Ferguson



Isaiah 11:8

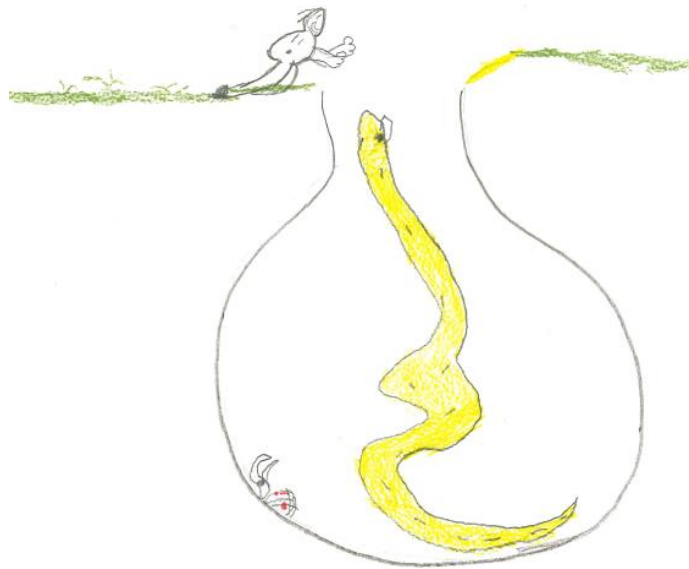
*"The nursing child shall play over the hole of the cobra,
and the weaned child shall put his hand on the adder's den."*

The beginning of Isaiah 11, we read about the coming of Jesus and the fruits of what he will bring to us. We will be delivered from fear and feel safe and secure in Christ. Seen later in passages 6-9 the great Shepherd, Christ, will take care of his flock from those who may want to destroy us.

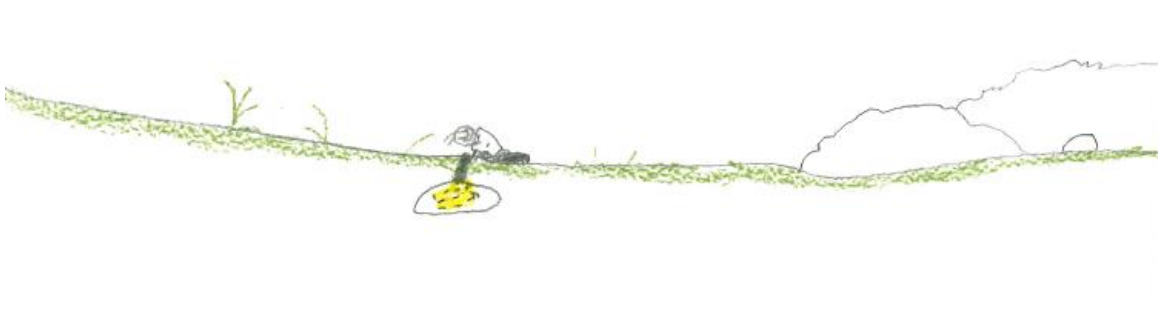
The nursing child and/or the weaned child is defenseless compared to the deadly cobra. However, with the promise of our returned Messiah the cobra poses no threat to humans. It is interesting that the first "serpent" in the Garden of Eden whose "bite" resulted from the death of mankind, later provided an "antidote" such as the healing blood of the Lamb of God. The gift of eternal life through Jesus which we can receive! Hallelujah, what a Savior!

Dear Lord,

We are so thankful to celebrate the first appearing of Jesus as a baby in a manger and also look forward to his return. We want to thank You during this Advent season for the reminders of our security in You and no matter our fears we have been delivered from that fear.
Amen.



Davis Banzhaf



Friday, December 21, 2018 – Robby Holditch
Isaiah 11:9

*“They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain:
for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea.”*

My Scripture is found within a chapter that details a “Branch from Jesse” which is translated as Jesus, the Son of David. Within Isaiah 11, Jesus is described as perfect and is cloaked in righteousness and faithfulness. The chapter also identifies natural enemies or direct counterparties that rarely co-exist.

After reading through chapter 11 and focusing specifically on verse 9, the verse took on a beautiful cause and effect relationship. Let’s focus first on the second portion of the verse and then the product. When universal acknowledgement of God’s love and the sacrifice of Jesus reaches the far corners of the earth (as water covers the sea), the effect will be a return to purity, not only in Israel but in all nations. This future state of grace is where natural enemies or counterparties that rarely co-exist will once again return to an overall peace and universal love for our God and for each other.

Prayer:

Father, May our prayers during this Christmas Season be a call to action to spread your love to those who are not aware of the reason we celebrate Christmas in hopes that our message will facilitate a return to that peacefulness and purity that can only be found in the understanding and acceptance of your love. In Jesus’ Name we pray, amen.



Jack Aarhus

Saturday, December 22, 2018 – Leslie Corey
Isaiah 11:10

*“In that day the root of Jesse,
Who shall stand as a signal for the peoples —
of Him shall the nations inquire,
and his resting place shall be glorious.”*

There shall be a root of Jesse, Who will stand as a standard (a sign, a signal) for all people, and the Gentiles will see and seek Him. The Root of Jesse represents Christ and his outreach to all the people who will become Christians, and they are supporting Him.

Advent season is a time leading up to Christmas and the time that we celebrate the Good News of the birth and coming of Jesus Christ. This is a time to pause and reflect on the true meaning of Christmas.

Prayer:

Dear God, thank You for the Root of Jesse and for all Christians saved in Christ. May we serve Him faithfully: the best Christmas gift possible.
In his Name we pray, amen.



Kate Fair



Mary Cameron Martin

A Note on Isaiah 12 and Our Final Devotions this Week Leading to Christmas:

It's almost Christmas! Are you ready? Decorations and packages? How about your heart?

Join us now as we complete our spiritual preparation.

Opening a trio of devotionals on Isaiah 12, Jack Forbus looks back on where we have been in Isaiah 11 this Advent and then brings us an introduction to Isaiah 12 and our final devotions for this season.

Fourth Sunday in Advent, December 23, 2018 – Jack Forbus

Isaiah 12:1-2

*“You will say in that day:
‘I will give thanks to you, O LORD,
for though you were angry with me,
your anger turned away,
that you might comfort me.*

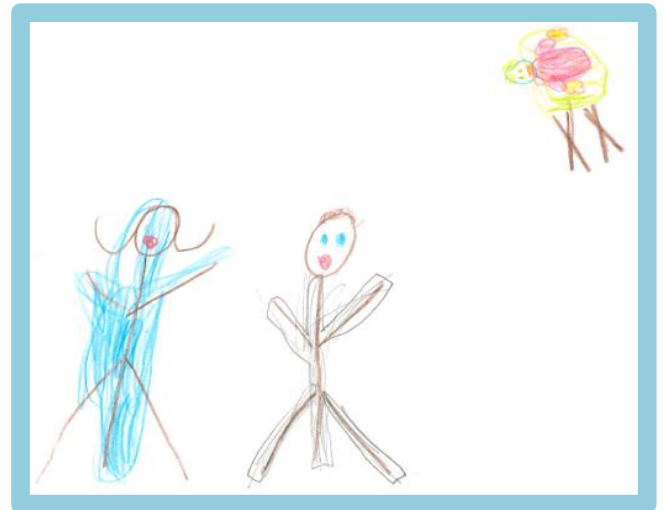
*‘Behold, God is my salvation;
I will trust, and will not be afraid;
for the LORD GOD is my strength and my song,
and he has become my salvation.’”*

Chapter 12 of Isaiah is a hymn of praises. It describes the joy of the people of Israel when Jesus will come to reign over the world. The theme of the forgiveness found in verse 1 & 2 is found in Chapter 11 with the great verse 1 -“A shoot will come from the stump of Jesse, from his roots a branch will bear fruit.” This is to show that Jesse was the father of David and Jesus was in the House of David. Jesse was the grandson of Boaz and Ruth. The people of Judah had been in disfavor with God a number of times and always God has forgiven his people.

The first two verses of Chapter 12 are a song of Praise and the return of the people to the loving arms of God the Father and the Christ who was to come. This is an example of how our lives are today. If we confess our sins, then God is great and just to forgive our sins and welcome us back into his fellowship.

These two verses state that God has comforted us and has become our salvation. We can trust God. We will not be afraid. The Lord is our strength and our song. We should be confident that God is our Salvation and He is on our side. We should always do his will and then He will not be angry with us. The actions of the people of God that cause God to be angry with them can certainly be related to our actions of today causing God to be angry with us. We should seek the Salvation of the Lord and be comforted by that.

Prayer:



Edie Kemp

Dear Father, we are thankful for this time of year as we look forward to the celebration of the Birth of Your Son: Jesus....You have blessed us beyond measure and far more than we deserve..... Thank You for your Grace and Salvation.... In the Name of Your Son Jesus we pray.

Christmas Eve, December 24, 2018 – Jim Beaty

Isaiah 12:3-4

*“With joy you will draw water from the wells of salvation. And you will say in that day:
‘Give thanks to the Lord; call upon his name!
Make known his deeds among the peoples,
proclaim that his name is exalted.’”*

It goes without saying that water has always maintained a life-giving quality. Certainly in historical Biblical settings a well often represents a community’s sole source of sustenance. The prophet Isaiah uses this metaphor of drawing water from a well to crystalize God’s offer of eternal sustenance through His plan of salvation.

During this time, God’s people had consistently turned away from Him – eventually resulting in an exile, defeat at the hands of their enemies and scattering of the people to foreign lands. Yet God still loved his people enough to show his unfathomable grace in the keeping of his promise of salvation through a yet to be born Messiah. For this, all of God’s people (including us) can proclaim His name as holy and exalted.

Prayer:

Father God, as You call us unto Yourself give us a heart of thankfulness and adulation in the gift of Christ Jesus as the Lamb born for us to take away our sins. Amen.



Tate Ferguson

Christmas Day, December 25, 2018 – Faith Lifer

Isaiah 12:5-6

*“Sing praises to the LORD, for he has done gloriously;
let this be made known in all the earth.
Shout, and sing for joy, O inhabitant of Zion,
for great in your midst is the Holy One of Israel.”*

Christmas is a time for song. Throughout the Christmas season, many familiar tunes are blared over the radio. Last year’s billboard charts boasted Mariah Carey’s *“All I Want for Christmas is You”* as the year’s number one ‘holiday’ song, with Brenda Lee’s *“Rockin’ Around the Christmas Tree”* following closely behind. I’m sure we all have our holiday favorites; there are many catchy tunes from which to choose. My personal favorite has always been Judy Garland’s humble, yet resonant *“Have Yourself a Merry Little Christmas,”* full of holiday sentiment and nostalgia.

Yet, throughout the multitude of holiday tunes, we mustn’t forget **our Christmas song**. Isaiah commands us: ***“Praise the LORD in song, for He has done excellent things!”*** Although we are called to praise God in all circumstances, this verse tells us to reflect and react to the excellent things God has done. And there is only one proper response: our song of praise should be ***“known throughout the earth.”***

We’ve spent the season of Advent in preparation for Christ’s coming, but today we celebrate His first coming, and God calls us to celebrate the Good News together as his joyful people: ***“Cry aloud and shout for joy...For great in your midst is the Holy One of Israel.”*** When Christ came to save us, we were given the greatest gift of all.

Does your song of praise reflect the Glory that was and is and is to come? When is the last time you cried aloud and shouted for joy in response to this Good News? When is the last time you ***shared this joy with someone who doesn’t yet know the greatest song of all?***

God’s Word in Isaiah invites us, reminds us, and inspires us this Christmas: ***Let your song for God be known today and all days.*** Merry Christmas!

Prayer:

Dear God, thank You for giving us Your Son so that we might be saved. Teach our hearts to understand the good news of the gospel and the coming of Jesus Christ. Help us to sing songs of praise worthy of You and all the excellent things You have done and all the things You will continue to do. As we gather with our loved ones this Christmas, remind us to sing praises to You together. In Jesus’ Name, Amen.





Cathryn Ryder

Merry Christmas
to you
*in The King
and in
His Coming Kingdom!*