

2009  
Advent Devotional Booklet



*April Evans*

SALEM LUTHERAN CHURCH  
of DELMONT

*First Sunday of Advent — November 29, 2009*

### **Joseph's Suspicion**

And the angel spoke and made an effort  
with the man, who clenched his fists;  
But dost thou not see every fold  
that she is cool as God's early day?

Yet the other looked somberly at him,  
murmuring only: What has changed her so?  
But at that the angel cried: Carpenter,  
dost thou not yet see the Lord God is acting?

Because thou makest boards, in thy pride,  
wouldst thou really call him to account  
who modestly out of the same wood  
makes leaves burgeon and buds swell?

He understood. And as he now raised his eyes  
very frightened, to the angel,  
he was gone. He pushed his heavy  
cap slowly off. Then he sang praise.

—*Rainer Maria Rilke*

*(translated from the German by M. D. Herter Norton)*

*Monday, November 30, 2009*

Anna Belle and Leonard Anderson

*Amos 2:6-16*

*“Thus says the Lord: for three transgressions of Israel and for four, I will not turn away its punishment, because they sell the righteous for silver, and the poor for a pair of sandals.”*

### **Thus Says the Lord**

Amos, just a sheep breeder, but chosen by God to prophesy to the Israelites. Obeying God's instructions, he did what he was sent to do. He reminded the people of the many times God had rescued the people from their enemies, had provided food and water for them, always being their protector in times of trouble. He also criticized them for their disobedience, committing evil works, thinking only of themselves and their wants, at the same time forgetting the poor and helpless who had real needs. Someday, Amos warned, they would be held accountable for their actions and inactions.

Do we take time to listen for God's instructions especially during this holiday season when we who have more than enough forget the many who have so little?

*Dear Lord God, Father of us all, we thank you for your many blessings. We thank you for the faithful prophets who have gone before us. Guide us that we would remain faithful in our witness and service to you. Amen*



*Kaylee Daniska*

*Tuesday, December 1, 2009*

Melissa Roberts

*Romans 8:19-23*

*“We know that the whole creation has been groaning in labor pains until now; and not only the creation, but we ourselves...” writes Paul in Romans (8:22,23).*

### **Waiting, Pregnant for God**

Any pregnant woman can describe the sensation of labor pains, how uncomfortable, startling, and unpredictable it is. Yet Paul chooses this image to describe waiting for God’s time, when God’s kingdom is at hand. In other words, life waiting for God’s kingdom is like being in labor, groaning and moaning uncomfortably until the kingdom comes.

No one likes to wait, whether it’s for the dentist, in traffic, in line to buy a Christmas present, for the pain medication to kick in, for the baby to be born, or for “freedom from the bondage to decay” (Romans 8:21).

Paul describes being a Christian as being like a pregnant woman, waiting for the new life to come forth, waiting despite the pain, always hoping for “the freedom of the glory of the children of God” (Romans 8:21).

Even after Jesus is born, Christians must still wait. Paul concludes the Romans passage, “we... groan inwardly while we wait for adoption, the redemption of our bodies” (Romans 8:23). No one is perfect, and all are constantly growing and changing, learning and living, more and more in God’s image and in God’s time. Waiting is, indeed, a part of waiting in God, too.

Advent season is a symbol of the big waiting game for Christians- living in hope of a loving, saving God. In Advent, the pregnant woman, which Paul calls the “world”, nears the time when she gives birth. Everyone waits, and waits, and waits. Then, on Christmas Day, Jesus Christ is born.

What celebrating, what rejoicing when the groaning and moaning ceased. As we all wait with the pregnant woman this Advent season, let us focus on the hope God is incubating for all of us in His Son, Jesus Christ. Amen.

*God of all creation, you made the world and all that is in it. Be with all creation waiting for your Son to come again this Christmas, and grant comfort and peace to all who wait. Amen.*

*Wednesday, December 2, 2009*

Scott Deutsch

*Matthew 22:34-36*

*“Teacher,” he asked, “which is the greatest commandment in the law?”*

### **The Greatest Commandment**

If you read Exodus and the story of Moses receiving the ten commandments, you can come to a conclusion that the Israelites in the wilderness are being prepared for delivery to the promised land.

God may have been preparing the Israelites for their newly found freedom by presenting the ten commandments to them.

This scripture reading prepares us for the coming of the Messiah in a similar way. Jesus will also teach us the commandments and demonstrate the way to the Godly life. We are instructed with commandments of forgiveness, compassion, and love.

And just as Moses and the Israelites are delivered out of slavery in Egypt, we too are delivered from the slavery of sin through our faith in the living Lord, Jesus Christ.

*Lord Jesus, help us to understand and to be prepared in our world for the forgiveness and grace you will bring. Amen*



*Nathan  
Burkhardt*

*Thursday, December 3, 2009*

The Rev. Dr. Douglas M. Heagy

*Jude 1-16*

*“... I find it necessary to write and appeal to you to contend for the faith that was once for all entrusted to the saints.”*

### **The Faith Entrusted to Us**

We live in a time of competing truth claims. Jesus declares, “I am the way, the truth, and the life.” But others say that Jesus is only one way among others. By this belief, it is held that many roads lead to the top of the mountain and that we must not focus our lives on only one way. Among all the truth claims regarding salvation it is easy to become confused and easy to begin doubting our own beliefs.

Inside an old church building where one brother of mine worships there is a receptacle on the ground floor that is the resting place of a pastor of the church who died over a hundred years ago. The epitaph for the pastor, who lived for only 39 years, states that he is resting in Jesus. These words, “resting in Jesus”, mean a great deal to me. When Jude writes that we must contend for the faith that was once for all entrusted to the saints, these saints are the ones who now “rest in Jesus” forever. Though many truth claims are made about God and salvation today, Jude’s words remind us that we are called to contend for faith in Christ alone. The saints before us who now “rest in Jesus” have passed on to us the belief that Jesus is the way, the truth, and the life. Let us be faithful in our years to contend for this faith and to pass it on to the next generations.

*Lord Jesus, you are the way. Help us to contend for faith in you and to abide in hope always. Amen*

Friday, December 4, 2009

Doug Rosensteel

*Revelation 2:8-17*

*“I know where you live—where Satan has his throne. Yet you remain true to my name. You did not renounce your faith in me, even in the days of Antipas, my faithful witness, who was put to death in your city—where Satan lives. Nevertheless, I have a few things against you... “*

### **Being true to Jesus**

In Revelation 2:8-17, Jesus commends the church for remaining true to His name even though Satan lived among them. They did not renounce their faith even under the threat of death. However, Satan led some of their members to eat food sacrificed to idols, to engage in immoral practices, and to do other things Jesus wasn't too happy about.

Satan still lives among us. He teaches us to hate instead of love, to hold a grudge instead of forgive. When one of our own beloved congregation does something we don't agree with, Satan will be there to stir the pot. When the ELCA makes unpopular decisions, Satan will take the opportunity to divide us. When our parents or siblings or children don't live up to our own high standards, Satan will drive in a wedge that may never come out. That's what he does. That's all he does. If we tolerate this type of interference from Satan, who are we being true to?

The Bible says “resist the devil, and he will flee from you.” Jesus gave us one commandment: Love God and love each other. If we do what He asks, we will be resisting the devil. When someone offends us, we have a choice. We can become bitter toward them, or we can ask Jesus to help us to see them as He sees them, and forgive. Having a forgiving heart is being true to Jesus. Holding a grudge is being true to Satan.

*Jesus, please open my eyes to see others the way you see them,  
and change my heart so that I can always forgive. Amen*

*Saturday, December 5, 2009*

Rev. Arthur Patterson (reprinted from 2006 Advent Devotion Book)

*Luke 21:25-28*

*Jesus said: "There will be signs in the sun, the moon, and the stars, and on the earth distress among nations....[people] will see 'the Son of Man coming in a cloud' with power and great glory. Now when these things take place, stand up and raise your heads, because your redemption is drawing near."*

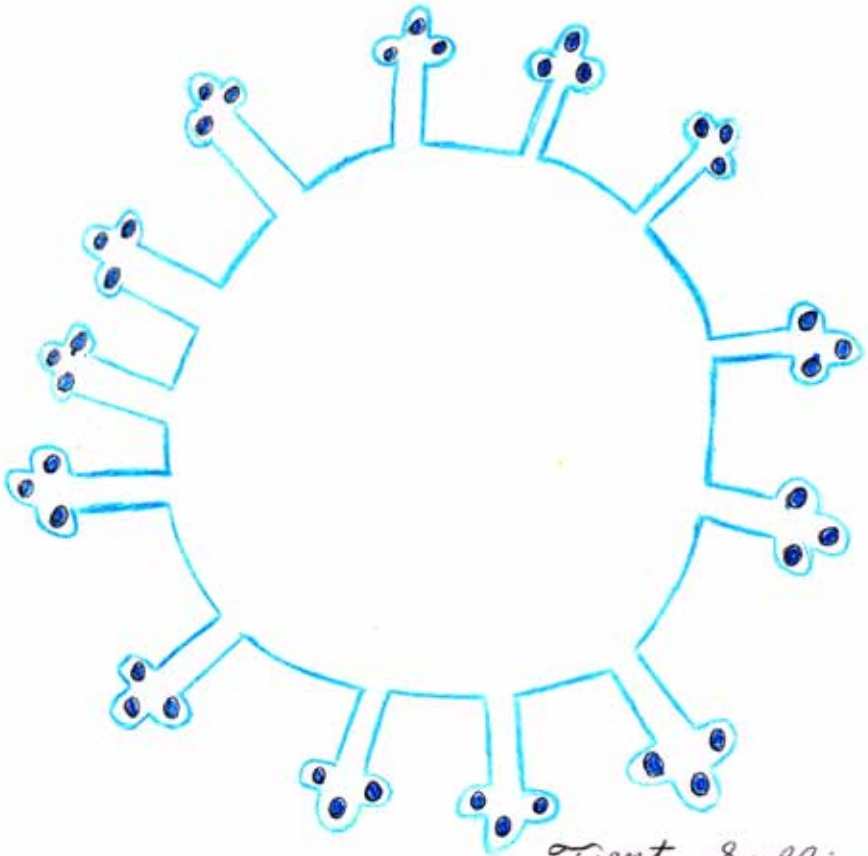
### **God's Promises**

Words of warning or words of promise. One of the promises that parents make is that they want their child to have all the opportunities they did not have as a child. Parents wish for their children a greater chance and wider scope of success. Our heavenly parent wishes no less for us. The first Advent held the promise of the coming Messiah. Now we work toward the second Advent with the promise that Jesus will return for the rapture that only the faithful can experience. In a world so demanding and hectic that we often find ourselves unable to keep the promises we make to others, it is good to know that God has kept those promises made in the past and will continue to keep them in the present and future. God promises to be with us, to bless our labors, to be with us and not desert us, even when everything seems to be breaking apart around us. When we accept Christ, we are assured of Christ's continual presence with us. All we need to do is accept that assurance and believe it. And once we believe, we are able to face the problems of this world with insurmountable courage.

The people of our age often get complacent because everything is going relatively easy. We forget our role as the people of God's promise. We sometimes forget the promises that we have made to others. In this world that is so hectic isn't it wonderful to know that God sent Jesus in the past and will send him again. That promise of God's is made real in the actions of God's died-for people. When God's people reach out to another, God's promise is fulfilled, the promise that says, "I will not leave you or forsake you." These are not times to fear or cower in the corner, but to stand boldly and receive God's promised redemption.

Thanks be to God.

*We give you thanks, Lord God, for your righteousness. We thank you for keeping your promise of salvation in Jesus. As we watch and wait for the coming of your Son, grant us the ability to respond to the needs of this age with the same goodness and mercy that you have given to us. Amen*



*Trent Sullivan*

*Second Sunday of Advent — December 6, 2009*

**Unto Us A Son Is Given**

Given, not lent,  
And not withdrawn—once sent,  
This Infant of mankind, this One,  
Is still the little welcome Son.

New every year,  
New born and newly dear,  
He comes with tidings and a song,  
The ages long, the ages long.

Even as the cold  
Keen winter grows not old  
As childhood is so fresh, foreseen,  
And spring in the familiar green.

Sudden as sweet  
Come the expected feet.  
All joy is young, and new all art,  
And He, too, Whom we have by heart.

*—Alice Meynell*

Monday, December 7, 2009

Nima Heagy

*Revelation 1:1-8;*

*“To Him who loves us and has freed us from our sins by His blood, and has made us to be a kingdom and priests to serve His God and Father, to Him be glory and power for ever and ever. Amen.” Revelation 1:5-6*

### **To God be the Glory**

There is an old hymn entitled “To God be the glory” that says “To God be the glory, great things He has done. So loved He the world that He gave us His Son, who yielded His life as an atonement for sin.” We are especially reminded of this great gift at Christmas time but we should remember the gift always. Because of this great gift to us we are able to read and study His word daily. We also can share these gifts with the friends and fellow Christians with whom we can study together. Hearing His word from the pulpit and sharing in discussions at Bible study, we hear the viewpoints of others, which helps us to learn more about You and grow in our faith. This encourages us to live for Him and serve Him more and more.

There is another hymn - one of my favorites, entitled “Because He Lives” that says, God sent His Son, they call Him Jesus, He came to love, heal and forgive; He lived and died to buy my pardon, an empty grave is there to prove my Savior lives. Because He lives I can face tomorrow; Because He lives all fear is gone; Because I know He holds the future and life is worth the living, just because He lives!

*Dear God, thank you for your gifts to us to be able to read and study your word. Thank you for the gift of friends and fellow believers. Most of all, thank you for the greatest gift of all - the gift of your Son. Amen*

*Tuesday, December 8, 2009*

Bill Matesevac

*Matthew 22:34-46*

*“Jesus replied, ‘You must love the Lord your God with all your heart, all your soul and all your mind.’ This is the first and greatest commandment. A second is equally important: Love your neighbor as yourself.” Matthew 22:37-39*

### **Love your neighbor!**

Jesus gave the above reply in answer to a Pharisee’s question. The Pharisee, in trying to trap Jesus, had asked “Teacher, which is the most important commandment in the Law of Moses?” Jesus’ reply was very simple and direct. The interesting thing about his answer, though, was that he gave us two commandments, not just one. I don’t think anyone was surprised when he said, “you must love the Lord your God with all your heart, all your soul and all your mind.” However, I think he threw a monkey wrench into the works when he said, “A second is equally important: ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’” Of course, this raises the question as to who is my neighbor. With the parable of The Good Samaritan, Jesus makes the point that a neighbor is defined by more than family relationship or location. Basically, my neighbor is EVERYONE!

This is why I said that Jesus threw a monkey wrench into the works with the second commandment. After all, we are continually striving to love God to the best of our abilities. But how can God expect us to love everyone. After all, so and so is a trouble maker, or insulted me, or said things about me behind my back, or hurt me in some way and so on. Now, unless we are a saint, and I certainly am not, we will never be able fully achieve “Love your neighbor as yourself.” This doesn’t mean that we should give up and not try to accomplish it. We need to keep working toward the goal of loving our neighbor as hard as we work toward loving God. I think the first step toward loving our neighbor is for each of us is to look into our own hearts, learn who we really are, and then forgive and love ourselves. After all, we are all sinners. By learning to forgive ourselves, it becomes easier to forgive our neighbor. Until we learn to forgive our neighbor for the real or perceived hurts, we will never be able to love them.

The task at hand is a very challenging and difficult one. And we can’t just try on Sunday morning, although that’s a good place to start. During this season of Advent, while we are preparing to celebrate the birth of Jesus, let’s get started on the task. At Sunday morning Service, offer a heartfelt smile and good morning to any member of the Congregation that crosses your path. Who knows, you may find out you like it!

Have a very MERRY CHRISTMAS!

*Prayer for the Day: Dear Jesus, come into my heart and fill me with your grace. Show me the way to be less selfish and more humble, more forgiving, to love my neighbor as myself and to follow in your footsteps.*

*Wednesday, December 9, 2009*

Jerry Colclaser

*Amos 8: 1-14**“Listen to this, you who rob the poor and trample the needy!” Amos 8: 4***The Lord will never forget wicked things.**

Devotion: Eight hundred years before the birth of Christ, Amos, a contemporary of the prophets Hosea, Isaiah, and Micah, delineated the sins of Israel. He complained specifically about people who “rob the poor and trample the needy!” Amos went on to accuse people of measuring grain using false measures and of weighing it with false scales. What does the Lord say about this?

According to Amos, the Lord said “I will never forget the wicked things you have done!” That was 2800 years ago and it’s still going on. Look what’s been happening to us recently. Risky loans that cause bank failures. People borrowing money they can never repay. Ridiculously high salaries and bonuses awarded to the CEO’s of industry, financial institutions, and brokerage firms. It’s actually the same kind of stuff that concerned Amos.

Have we been abandoned by the God who sent his Son to save us? Hardly – Amos tells us the Lord will “send a famine of hearing his words.” Those who worship false idols will fall down, never to rise again. We’ve had too many people worshipping the idol of money, and it has affected all of us. Remember what the Lord has predicted – “They will fall” – and it has already started for the latest group of sinners. God is holy and good, and He expects the same from his people. At this time of Christmas and the celebration of Christ’s birth, it is time for you to reaffirm your faith in the Lord and, if necessary, realign the path you are taking.

*Prayer for Today: Our Father in Heaven, keep us strong in our faith and guide us as we go about our daily lives. Give us strength in the face of temptation, and show us your holy ways. Make us aware of your love for us, and accept our efforts on your behalf. In your name we pray. Amen.*

Thursday, December 10, 2009

Shirley Mansfield

*Amos 6:1-14*

*“Woe to those who are at ease in Zion and to those who feel secure in the mountains of Samaria.” Amos 6: 1*

### **Some things never change**

Amos was a prophet of Judah, the Southern Kingdom, with a message to Israel, the Northern Kingdom, in the reigns of Uzziah King of Judah, and Jeroboam II King of Israel. It had been some 200 years since the Ten Tribes had set up the Northern Kingdom, with calf-worship as its religion. Baal worship had also been adopted, plus many abominable practices of Canaanite Idolatry were still rampant. God had sent many prophets, but to no avail. Then God sent Amos and Hosea in a final effort to stay the Nation in its mad dash for death.

Remember the period of “ease”, feelings of security, prosperity, before experiencing September 11, 2001, when the Nation started a downward spiral. What are our Idols, our abominable practices that we are dealing with today? We can change, if we would read the Bible more often, attend church services on a regular basis, pray and witness for Jesus.

*Dear Lord: Help us realize how complacent we have become in our everyday living. Help us rid ourselves of our evil ways and help us change, one person at a time, to become a Christian Nation again. Amen*



Friday, December 11, 2009

Richard and Eleanor Cribbs

*Revelations 3: 1-6*

*“Be watchful and strengthen the things which remain, that are ready to die: for I have not found thy works perfect before God.”*

### **Keep Your Faith to be United with Christ**

The book of Revelation is so different from other books of the New Testament that there are various interpretative views of the purpose of this book.

It is clear that God wrote the book of Revelations through the hand of someone named John.

One of the purposes of the book was to show that Christ loves those who love Him. He loved us and so chose to offer this book to encourage us with something of what we have to look forward to.

Another purpose of the book was to provide a constant reminder to Christians who would follow the Apostolic age that Christ can return at any time, and to encourage us to remain faithful, just as Christ is faithful.

*Prayer: God, what we have done is not perfect.*

*Please help us to obey you and turn from our sins. Amen*



*Saturday, December 12, 200p*

Jean Painter

This Devotion is being reprinted from the  
1999 Advent Devotional  
In Memory of Jean Painter

*Revelation 3:14-22*

*Behold I stand at the door and knock; if anyone hears and listens to and heeds My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and will eat with him, and he with Me.*

### **Open The Door To Jesus**

This letter is to Laodicea which receives no praise because of the unfavorable condition of lukewarmness in this church. The members were neither hot or cold. A lukewarm person does not become greatly disturbed at false teaching, and does not stand in defense of the truth. This spirit of indifference is the most tragic thing that can happen to a church. The close of this letter is different from the others in that it makes an application to the individual believer. We need to be fully committed to Jesus not just on Sunday, but every day.

What a promise is waiting for us in verse 20! Jesus is knocking at the door and all we have to do is open the door to Him. He will be with us in time of joy, through trials and tribulations, in sickness and health, and in our sorrow. Christ the Lord is also knocking at the door of His church. It is up to us to let Him in.

*Dear Heavenly Father, help us to keep the door open, so we can listen to and heed Your voice. Amen*



*Third Sunday of Advent — December 13, 2009*

### **December Stillness**

December stillness, teach me through your trees  
That loom along the west, one with the land,  
The veiled evangel of your mysteries.

While nightfall, sad and spacious, on the down  
Deepens, and dusk imbues me, where I stand,  
With grave diminishings of green and brown,  
Speak, roofless Nature, your instinctive words;  
And let me learn your secret from the sky,  
Following a flock of steadfast, journeying birds  
In lone remote migration beating by.

December stillness, crossed by twilight roads,  
Teach me to travel far and bear my loads.

—*Siegfried Sassoon*

*Monday, December 14, 2009*

Linda DelBaggio (reprinted from 2006 Advent Devotion Book)

*Isaiah 9:2-7*

*“The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light.”*

### **Walk In The Light**

This passage is part of one of the beautiful readings we hear on Christmas. As Assisting Minister on many Christmas eves I have had the privilege of reading this passage. It never becomes old but always fills us with great hope and joy.

Our world today is very much like the world that was waiting for the Savior. They were oppressed, enslaved and filled with the darkness of sin. We too have much to fear today. Some are enslaved by work and keeping up, others abuse of all kinds, while others are enslaved with alcohol; and drugs and on and on. We are at war and terror fills our news and our thoughts. We know what it is like to be in great darkness. Unlike the people of Jesus day, we know the light of the world has come we do not have to wait as they did.

Jesus came to release us from the darkness of sin and despair. We must prepare ourselves to walk in the light with Him. This will not be easy for we must come out of the shadows for all to see our actions. If we but ask, Jesus will take us by the hand and walk with us.

*Heavenly Father, grant that we may prepare ourselves to meet the light of the world and walk out of our darkness and into the light. Amen*

Tuesday, December 15, 2009

Shannon Deutsch

Matthew 24:32-44

*“So then, you all must be ready, because the Son of Man will come at an hour when you are not expecting him.” Matthew 24:44*

### **Expect the Unexpected**

Suppose you didn't know when Christmas was coming. When you wake up on December 25, not knowing that Christmas is coming, you see trees, presents, and, most importantly, Jesus. Mary received an unexpected visitor, the angel, saying she was going to have a child. Keeping on the same track of unexpected things, the shepherds in the field didn't know what was going on when they saw the star in the sky. Nobody knew that Jesus Christ was coming.

We spend weeks and weeks preparing for Christmas. We buy dozens of gifts. But are we ready for Jesus? Are we ready for the gift that he's going to give us? We always make sure that we have all of our shopping done and cookies baked. But do we prepare enough for the birth of Jesus?

*Lord, help me be prepared for the birth of Jesus Christ and the gifts that he brings. Amen.*



Wednesday, December 16, 2009

Melissa Roberts

*John 1:6-12*

*“He himself was not the light, but he came to testify to the light” John 1:8*

### **John the Baptist, Witness to the Light**

John the Baptist has much in common with Christians today. First, he believed Jesus Christ was his lord and savior. Second, others around him found him strange and unnerving because of his beliefs. But most importantly, John struggled to point others to the source of light in his life, Jesus Christ.

It's difficult finding balance between one's own abilities and God's power in one's life. The world teaches us to point to ourselves when something goes right. John's message is quite different.

John's scripture differentiates between John the Baptist and Jesus and touches on how to give glory to God. John is described as “a witness to testify to the light, so that all might believe through him” (John 1:6). Jesus, on the other hand, is the light, “the true light, which enlightens everyone” (John 1:8).

Throughout the scripture reading, John's life and work points to Jesus. As a witness, John shares who Jesus is and why Jesus is here. “But to all who received him, who believed in his name, he gave power to become children of God” (John 1:12).

The power of God making all who believe in Him His children, that power is the source of light and life. No wonder the scripture called John the Baptist a witness- like a teacher explaining how electricity lights up a power grid, John the Baptist merely points out how God powers the world- through the love and sacrifice of Jesus Christ.

Reading scripture outside of the portion of John for today, one knows John the Baptist's life was anything but easy. He lived in the desert, eating locusts and wild honey in sore need of a stylist's touch. He traveled around with a band of believers, never resting, without a home, to preach God's word. In the end, like so many figures who preach God's love in any time, the local political regime did him in with the head on platter routine.

God doesn't call all of us to lose our heads to the nearest platter. Indeed, God's plan for each of his beloved children is as different as each child is different, uniquely imprinted with the mystery and majesty of God's purposes.

As God's witnesses, God calls each of us to point to the light in different ways. John the Baptist could preach and travel and baptize. Every one of God's child has gifts given for God's glory- teaching, listening, service, organization, patience, self-control- the gifts are as diverse as God's children.

*This Advent, as Jesus approaches, Christians everywhere can give gifts to Jesus and witness to the light, like John the Baptist and many before and since.*

*Who are you, and what are you giving Jesus this Christmas? Amen.*

*Thursday, December 17, 2009*

Chelsea Burkhart

*Matthew 25:1-13*

*“Watch therefore, for you know neither the day nor the hour.” Matthew 25:13*

**A Gift**

God is giving us a gift  
A gift like no other  
God is giving us a baby  
A baby born from a mother  
As Christmas comes the angels sing  
And everyone rejoices  
Soon the son of god will be born  
He will be teaching us to make good choices  
When Jesus arrives on the starry night  
All of the angels will sing  
Christmas will be here soon  
Behold the new baby, behold the new born king

*Friday, December 18, 2009*

John, Beth and Hannah Lawrence

*Scripture: Zechariah 7:8-8:8*

*“So once again, I, the lord all-powerful, tell you, See that justice is done and be kind and merciful to one another!”*

### **Kindness Towards All**

For many of us life can be difficult at a time when the joyous birth of Chris is not. We tend to forget the teachings of God with the hustle and bustle of the season. Our tempers are short, our patience thin and money is scarce. We forget to be kind, say a pleasant word, give encouragement or help the less fortunate.

*Oh Lord, open our hearts to teach us to treat everyone equally and to do your will. Amen.*



*Saturday, December 19, 2009*

Jerry Colclaser

*Scripture: Matthew 25: 31-46*

*“...I assure you, when you refused to help the least of these my brothers and sisters, you were refusing to help me.” Matthew 25: 45*

### **Are you among the “Blessed?”**

What does it mean to be a Christian? To start with, you must believe in Christ, but what else is involved? Your actions are critical. Matthew tells us that when the Son of Man comes in his glory, all the nations will be separated into the categories of “Blessed” and “Cursed.” The “Blessed” will have eternal life, while the “Cursed” will be eternally punished.

Who are the “Blessed?” The people who, 2000 years ago, fed Jesus when he was hungry, gave him a drink when he was thirsty, or cared for him when he was sick. What must you do to be one of the “Blessed” today? In Matthew it is written that “when you did it to one of the least of my brothers and sisters, you were doing it to me!” Therefore, when you help others in any way, you are helping the Son of Man and eternal life is your reward. Before you routinely say “no,” give it some thought the next time you are asked for help. Which side of the ledger are you on?

*Our Father in Heaven, keep us strong in our faith as we go about our daily lives. Help us to make the right choices in response to the cries for help from others. In your name we pray. Amen.*



*Fourth Sunday of Advent — December 20, 2009*

### The Gift

As the wise men of old brought gifts  
guided by a star  
to the humble birthplace

of the god of love,  
the devils  
as an old print shows  
retreated in confusion.

What could a baby know  
of gold ornaments  
or frankincense and myrrh,  
of priestly robes  
and devout genuflections?

But the imagination  
knows all stories  
before they are told  
and knows the truth of this one  
past all defection

The rich gifts  
so unsuitable for a child  
though devoutly proffered,  
stood for all that love can bring.  
The men were old  
how could they know  
of a mother's needs  
or a child's  
appetite?

But as they kneeled  
the child was fed.  
They saw it  
and gave praise!  
A miracle

had taken place,  
hard gold to love,  
a mother's milk!  
before  
their wondering eyes.

The ass brayed  
the cattle lowed.  
It was their nature.

All men by their nature give praise.  
It is all  
they can do.

The very devils  
by their flight give praise.  
What is death,  
beside this?  
Nothing. The wise men  
came with gift

and bowed down  
to worship  
this perfection.

—*William Carlos Williams*

*Monday, December 21, 2009*

Alexis Arrigo

*Scripture: Genesis 3:8-15*

*“That evening they heard the Lord God walking in the garden, and they hid from him among the trees. But the Lord God called out to the man, ‘Where are you?’”*

### **Are You Hiding?**

This scripture tells about how Adam and Eve hid from God. When we make a bad decision, we lie about it to our parents. We also do this to God. We hide from Him and don't talk to Him about what we have done. But can we really hide from God? God is always with us and knows what we do, but what makes our relationship stronger with Him is if we pray and talk to Him. Yes, human beings make mistakes, but if we confront God and ask Him for forgiveness we will be forgiven. When we try to hide ourselves from God, we are missing out on all of the wonderful things He can teach us. God will help us learn from our mistakes, not only by the actions we choose to do but by how we change our mind. Jesus sacrificed Himself for us to save us from our sins. Praying to Him and emotionally thinking about Him helps us to be stronger in our faith. Hiding from God won't answer the question many people ask themselves, Will I be forgiven?, because God wants to forgive you if you know what you have done is wrong. God wants to lead us to heaven. Just remember to open you heart, mind and soul to God, and you won't feel hidden anymore, because God is always watching over you.

*Dear God, help us to keep our heart, mind and soul open to you always and help us to know that you are always with us. Amen*

*Tuesday, December 22, 2009*

Enola Erdley

*Luke 1:26-35*

*“But she was much perplexed by his words and pondered what sort of greeting this might be.” Luke 1:29*

## **Perplexed**

When we think of Gabriel’s visit to Mary, we think of the mighty angel, his news and the young woman’s reply to the angel, “Here am I the servant of the Lord; let it be according to your word.”

That line has been a touchstone for generations of Christians seeking to mirror Mary’s obedience.

From Mary’s statement of servanthood, we typically skip on a few verses to one of the loveliest songs in the New Testament: Mary’s Song of Praise, or the Magnificat.

Rarely, do we pause to think about her immediate reaction to this most unsettling of visits or Gabriel’s announcement that Mary was God’s “favored one,” and that “the Lord was with her.”

It’s reassuring to learn Mary was perplexed. Like most of us, this young woman was taken aback when the God she loved and adored entered her universe up close and personal via Gabriel’s greeting.

We learn as we watch Mary, that catching God’s favor doesn’t always ensure a life of ease. Doing God’s will doesn’t come with any guarantees of wealth or power. Like her Son, Mary would suffer for the favor God granted her. But, like her Son, she was obedient to the Father.

*Lord, forgive us our confusion. Everyday we encounter the challenge of doing Your will and often, like Mary, our first reaction is confusion. Help us, like Mary, to rise to the challenge of servanthood. Amen.*

*Wednesday, December 23, 2009*

Linda Delbaggio

*Luke 1:39-48*

*And Mary said, "My soul magnifies the Lord, and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior" Luke 1:46-47*

### **My Soul Doth Magnify the Lord**

These verses include the Magnificat or Mary's Song. Mary has great praise for and trust in the Lord. The vents that happened to her must have been very scary and worrisome. She was visited by an angel from God who told her of an almost unbelievable situation that would happen to her. She must have had some fear for her situation would not be acceptable in the society of that day. Mary had great faith and accepted without hesitation the Lord's plan for her. She loved and praised the Lord even though she might not have fully understood what was ahead of her.

As we grow closer to to Christmas Eve and the coming of the Christ child again in our hearts, let us pray for the love and faith that Mary had. Let us try to live daily so we too can sing with Mary — "My Soul Doth Magnify the Lord!"

*Dear Lord, help us to have the faith Mary had so that our lives will also magnify the Lord. Amen*

*Christmas Eve — Thursday, December 24, 2009*

Rev. Robert J Marks.

*Luke 2: 1-12*

Luke the Evangelist reminds us that God's promises are rarely neat and tidy. They more often emerge in life from blood and sweat poured out in strange places, with fearsome and awe-filled announcements. It has been said the most destructive element in the human mind is fear. Fear creates aggressiveness, aggressiveness engenders hostility; hostility engenders fear—a terrible cycle. At the same time the world encourages us to sentimentalize and sanitize the Christmas story so that we will be content with a shadow of its real power. When we dare to resist, we can discover what God is really seeking to give us: liberation from fear, eternal hope and lives of true worldly meaning.



*Christmas Day — Friday, December 25, 2009*

Pastor Heitzenroder

*Matthew 1:18-25*

*Key Verse: Matthew 1:18- “Now the birth of Jesus Christ took place in this way...”*

### **God With Us**

Over the centuries many generations have longed for God’s promised Messiah. The, around two thousand years ago, a young girl named Mary conceived a child by the Holy Spirit. The man to whom she was betrothed was told by an angel that the child she would bear was God’s Son, Jesus.

God’s power and blessing worked through common lives to bring forth Jesus the Messiah, Joseph and Mary, ordinary adults nurtured by generations before them, were open to god’s extraordinary activity in their lives. They were common people whose willing hearts and courage powerfully proclaimed the Good News of the One who would save his people from heir sins.

Countless centuries and generations later, you and I are called to proclaim the Good News f Emmanuel, “God with us.” Our neighborhoods, our communities, and our world are filled with those who long to know Jesus’ love and saving presence in their lives. God uses us in all our ordinariness and sinfulness to bring forth the promise and light of Christ’s live and salvation.

This Christmas Season, may the Holy Spirit give you faith, courage, and a willing heart as you take part in God’s on-going miracle. May you know the joy and awe that comes from having “God with us” and bearing His creative and redeeming love to all the world.

*Good and gracious God, we pray that you may be with us not only this Christmas but throughout the year as well Amen.*

*Merry Christmas*

*Pastor Heitzenroder*



By: Jordan  
Nunnery