

Christmas Eve Devotional 2023

Merry Christmas church family! As there are no morning services on Sunday, December 24, we're providing you with a devotional to share with your family, friends, or between you and the Lord. These readings and reflective questions are a compilation of what we've been learning together throughout Advent. We encourage you to set aside time in the morning to reflect on the joy of the incarnation and then join us this afternoon for one of our Christmas Eve services at 2:00 pm, 3:30 pm, or 5:00 pm. (At the 2:00 pm service childcare is provided for infants and toddlers; at the 3:30 pm service childcare is provided for infants through 4th grade).

Pray: Invite the Lord to make fresh the depth of Christ's love for you this Christmas.

Scripture readings: (Ask those with you to help with the readings. If you have kids, you might even try to act the story out).

Matthew 1:1-6,16

This is the genealogy of Jesus the Messiah the son of David, the son of Abraham:

² *Abraham was the father of Isaac,
Isaac the father of Jacob,*

Jacob the father of Judah and his brothers,

³ *Judah the father of Perez and Zerah, whose mother was Tamar,
Perez the father of Hezron,*

Hezron the father of Ram,

⁴ *Ram the father of Amminadab,
Amminadab the father of Nahshon,*

Nahshon the father of Salmon,

⁵ *Salmon the father of Boaz, whose mother was Rahab,*

Boaz the father of Obed, whose mother was Ruth,

Obed the father of Jesse,

⁶ *and Jesse the father of King David....*

¹⁶ *and Jacob the father of Joseph, the husband of Mary, and Mary was the mother of
Jesus who is called the Messiah.*

Luke 1:26-38

²⁶ *In the sixth month, God sent the angel Gabriel to Nazareth, a town in Galilee, ²⁷ to a virgin pledged to be married to a man named Joseph, a descendant of David. The virgin's name was Mary. ²⁸ The angel went to her and said, "Greetings, you who are highly favored! The Lord is with you."*

29 Mary was greatly troubled at his words and wondered what kind of greeting this might be. 30 But the angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary; you have found favor with God. 31 You will be with child and give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus. 32 He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give him the throne of his father David, 33 and he will reign over the house of Jacob forever; his kingdom will never end."

34 "How will this be," Mary asked the angel, "since I am a virgin?"

35 The angel answered, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. So, the holy one to be born will be called the Son of God. 36 Even Elizabeth your relative is going to have a child in her old age, and she who was said to be barren is in her sixth month. 37 For nothing is impossible with God."

38 "I am the Lord's servant," Mary answered. "May it be to me as you have said." Then the angel left her.

Matthew 1:18-25

18 This is how the birth of Jesus Christ came about: His mother Mary was pledged to be married to Joseph, but before they came together, she was found to be with child through the Holy Spirit. 19 Because Joseph her husband was a righteous man, and did not want to expose her to public disgrace, he had in mind to divorce her quietly.

20 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. 21 She will give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins."

22 All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had said through the prophet: 23 "The virgin will be with child and will give birth to a son, and they will call him Immanuel"—which means, "God with us."

24 When Joseph woke up, he did what the angel of the Lord had commanded him and took Mary home as his wife. 25 But he had no union with her until she gave birth to a son. And he gave him the name Jesus."

Luke 2:8-20

"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 of great joy that will be for all the people. Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is the Christ 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, and on earth peace to men on whom his favor rests."

¹⁵ 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."

¹⁶ So they hurried off and found Mary and Joseph, and the baby, who was lying in the manger. ¹⁷ When they had seen him, they spread the word concerning what had been told them about this child, ¹⁸ and all who heard it were amazed at what the shepherds said to them. ¹⁹ But Mary treasured up all these things and pondered them in her heart. ²⁰ The shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all the things they had heard and seen, which were just as they had been told.

Matthew 2:1-12

After Jesus was born in Bethlehem in Judea, during the time of King Herod, Magi^{1a} from the east came to Jerusalem ² and asked, "Where is the one who has been born king of the Jews? We saw in the east and have come to worship him."

³ When King Herod heard this he was disturbed, and all Jerusalem with him. ⁴ When he had called together all the people's chief priests and teachers of the law, he asked them where the Christ was to be born. ⁵ "In Bethlehem in Judea," they replied, "for this is what the prophet has written:

*⁶ "But you, Bethlehem, in the land of Judah,
are by no means least among the rulers of Judah;
for out of you will come a ruler
who will be the shepherd of my people Israel."*

⁷ Then Herod called the Magi secretly and found out from them the exact time the star had appeared. ⁸ He sent them to Bethlehem and said, "Go and make a careful search for the child. As soon as you find him, report to me, so that I too may go and worship him."

⁹ After they had heard the king, they went on their way, and the star they had seen in the east went ahead of them until it stopped over the place where the child was. ¹⁰ When they saw the star, they were overjoyed. ¹¹ 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 and of incense and of myrrh. ¹² And having been warned in a dream not to go back to Herod, they returned to their country by another route.

1 Corinthians 1:26-29

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. ²⁷ 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. ²⁸ He chose the lowly things of this world and the despised things—and the things that are not—to nullify the things that are, ²⁹ so that no one may boast before him.”

Reflective questions for young families:

1. What do you most like about the story of Jesus’ birth?
2. Which character of the Christmas story are most similar to and why?
3. If you were a shepherd, what would you share with others about Jesus’ birth?
4. How does Jesus bring you joy?

Reflective questions for everyone else:

1. When you consider the people God used in the Christmas story, what do they have in common? What themes do you find in their stories? What is true of their character?
2. What is the significance about the people God chose to be a part of the story of Christmas? What does this say about how God might want to use you?
3. Rahab, Mary, Joseph, the shepherds, and the Wise Men each chose obedience as their response to God. As you look towards 2024, is there an area of obedience that God is inviting you and your family into?
4. Why were the shepherds so overjoyed at the announcement of the Messiah? What does the birth of the Savior mean for you? How is Jesus bringing you joy this Christmas season?
5. The Wise Men gave gifts “*of gold and of incense and of myrrh*” to the newborn King. What gift might you give to Jesus as the New Year approaches?

May the Lord bless you and yours as you celebrate the birth of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

Merry Christmas!