

*Devotions
for the
Advent Season*

2020

Celebrating the Life of Jesus Christ



First Baptist Garland
Dr. Greg Ammons, Senior Pastor



The Advent Wreath

The German Christians began using the advent wreath at the time of the Renaissance. There is a lot of Christian symbolism wrapped up in the making and the use of the advent wreath. The shape of the wreath, a circle, symbolizes eternity. The evergreen is an ancient symbol of eternal life. The first violet candle symbolizes peace, representing the town of Bethlehem where the Prince of Peace made His first appearance. The second violet candle symbolizes love as heard in the angelic announcement. The third candle is rose in color and symbolizes the joy of the shepherds. The fourth candle is violet and symbolizes hope, as seen in the prophecies of the Messiah's coming. The fifth candle is the white candle in the center, and it symbolizes Christ.

One candle is lighted on each of the four Sundays before Christmas Day, and the white candle is lighted on Christmas Day. Each week the light grows brighter and brighter, indicating the coming of the Light of the World.

*Devotions
for the
Advent Season*

Celebrating the Life of Jesus Christ

First Week of Advent

November 29-December 5, 2020

First Day of Advent - November 29

“Eternal Life”

Scripture Reading: John 3:16, Isaiah 7:14

Jesus did not come into this world at Christmastime to make us nice people. He came to make us new creatures. The birth of Jesus is the foundation stone of this world’s salvation. This full payment was made by the substitutionary death of the virgin-born Son of God. He had to be a man to die for our sins, but He had to be sinless to pay the sin debt. By means of both the cradle and the cross, God is now just and the justifier of those who believe in Jesus.

Prayer Time

Activity: Pray for others in your immediate and extended family who do not have a clear testimony of having received Jesus Christ as their personal Savior and Lord.

Second Day of Advent - November 30

“Enriched Life”

Scripture Reading: John 10:10, II Corinthians 8:9

Jesus came that we might have abundant life. There is a vast difference between mere existence and abundant life. While we have existence with our first (physical) birth, we have abundant life through our second (spiritual) birth. It is this abundant life that we all desperately need. The scripture teaches that Jesus Christ became poor that we might become rich. Our dear Savior left the splendors of heaven and was born into poverty. Heaven’s King was born in a barn—a monarch in a manger. Yet it is through His poverty that we have this abundant life. Christmas means a life abundantly rich. To understand how rich Christmas has made you, add up everything you have in Christ that money cannot buy and death cannot take away.

Prayer Time

Activity: Take inventory of your own true riches and to give thanks for all that God has provided. Write them down and post the list on your refrigerator door as a reminder.

Third Day of Advent - December 1

“Empowered Life”

Scripture Reading: Ephesians 1:15-19

The power locked up in an atomic particle waiting to be released through nuclear fusion is incredible. When the atom is split, it releases power in a ratio of one to six million. This power is insignificant, however, when compared to the power wrapped up in a seemingly helpless baby lying on the straw in a cattle barn. Jesus came to earth that first Christmas to cause a release of spiritual energy that would shake the universe. Jesus came as a man and took flesh and blood so “that through death He would destroy him that had the power of death” (Hebrews 2:14). Satan is now a defeated foe. God did not defeat him as God but, rather, defeated him as Holy Man. That man is the Christ of Christmas.

Prayer Time

Activity: Think about demonstrations of earthly power that you have seen or know about, then search the for illustrations of evil, satanic power. Next, rejoice in the abundant power because of the birth of Bethlehem’s Babe.

Fourth Day of Advent - December 2

“Ennobled Life”

Scripture Reading: Luke 2:4-7

Christmas days are often filled with frustration, indigestion, and industrial-strength irritation. Often Jesus seems to be forgotten and left behind the door. No wonder the little girl was heard to pray, “forgive us our Christmases.” If the world has little room for Jesus even on Christmas, what about the rest of the year? That incident in Bethlehem foreshadowed the lifetime rejection that heaven’s King would receive. Not only was He born in a stable, but He was crucified outside the city walls between two thieves and buried in a borrowed tomb. Indeed, He was despised and rejected by men (Isaiah 53:3). What caused the people of Jesus’ day to miss such a great event? Indifference? Ignorance? Involvement? These are still the Christmas killers. Yet, the Christ of Christmas brings ennobling life to those who still seek Him.

Prayer Time

Activity: Browse a local news channel’s website and see how the Christmas season has room for everything but Jesus. Consider what it means to bear His shame and share His glory.

Fifth Day of Advent - December 3

“Expectant Life”

Scripture Reading: Luke 2:25-32

Birthdays are a time of celebration. Yet, if it were not for the birthday of our King, what would every other birthday mean? It could only mean we are one day nearer death and judgment. Because of the Christ of Christmas, we can live the abundant life of anticipation and expectation. Today’s scripture tells of Simeon—a name that means “listening one.” Simeon was anticipating the first coming of Jesus. The Christ of Christmas is coming again. As Simeon prepared for His first coming, we should prepare for His glorious second coming. Joseph and Mary brought the baby Jesus to the temple. Simeon took that little baby in his arms, held Him close to his heart, and declared, “Now I am ready to die. I am completely satisfied. My heart is at rest.” In Christ who came, we are ready for the Christ who is coming again. We have expectant life.

Prayer Time

Activity: Imagine what it would have been like to anticipate the birth of Jesus and reflect on what a glorious day it will be when He returns.

Sixth Day of Advent - December 4

“Impassioned Life”

Scripture Reading: Hebrews 1:1-4

The life that Jesus gives is not dull nor common. It is vibrant and impassioned life. That life should be lived with a passionate, emotional, blazing love for the Lord Jesus Christ. His name towers above all others. H.G. Wells once listed the greatest men of history; Jesus Christ was number one on the list. It is the uniqueness of Jesus that sets the Christ of Christmas apart from all others. The key phrase in the book of Hebrews uses the word “better.” It is used 13 times. God is saying that we can come to know Jesus better, but we can never find anything better than knowing Jesus. He is indeed the superlative Savior. All hail the power of Jesus’ name!

Prayer Time

Activity: Think of as many Bible names for Jesus as you can. Is one of Jesus’ names especially meaningful to you? Reflect on His wonderful names and what they mean to you. Remember, Jesus’ name Immanuel means “God with us”—not just at Christmas, but every day of the year!

Seventh Day of Advent - December 5

“Sinless Life”

Scripture Reading: 1 John 3:3-4

“Hope in Him.” Our hope in Jesus is that we are no longer slaves to sin. Having been purified and made holy, and given the sure hope of eternal life, we seek that which is holy and right. Born of God, we are now free to serve our Savior.

Practice of sinning. It’s the only thing one can do prior to being born of God through faith in Christ.

Lawlessness. The sinner’s natural orientation and inclination to hate God and violate His law.

Because we are children of God, we must not live like the world lives. We have been purified (washed in His blood) and sanctified (set apart for His use).

We are a new creation. No longer do we follow the love of sin (practice sin), but we follow Him who knew no sin. Jesus is our Savior and He desires the very best of our service.

Prayer Time

Activity: Think about one thing you can do to live your life as a witness for Jesus.



Celebrating the Light of Jesus Christ

Second Week of Advent

December 6-December 12, 2020

Eighth Day of Advent - December 6

“The Great Light”

Scripture Reading: Isaiah 9:1-2

There is one truth that leaps off the pages of the Bible at Christmas: that Jesus came to be the light of the world. Light entered this dark world when Jesus was born in Bethlehem. Isaiah calls Jesus “a great light” who has shone on those who “walked in darkness” (Isaiah 9:2). Wherever you turn in God’s Word, Christmas is about light. We love to sing the Christmas carol, *Silent Night*, but this great hymn is not about the night or darkness; rather, it’s about the light. We sing at Christmas because we have the same thing to sing about. Light has come into the world and we don’t ever need to walk in darkness again!

Prayer Time

Activity: Light a candle or turn on a flashlight and turn off the lights. Read John 1:1-9. Each time you read the word “light,” thank God for sending Jesus to be our light of Christmas. Reflect on your salvation experience. Pray for others who do not have a clear testimony of having received Jesus Christ as their personal Savior and Lord.

Ninth Day of Advent - December 7

“The Pure Light”

Scripture Reading: John 1:6-10

In the natural world, there is nothing as pure as light. Light can never be defiled or corrupted, no matter what it passes through or falls on. Light can never be corrupted or blackened. You can shine light through a dirty windowpane or a glass of muddy water, and all the light does is expose the dirt. The light is not touched by the dirt. Therefore, light is a wonderful picture of the Lord Jesus Christ. Jesus exposes sin, but He was never contaminated by sin. Jesus could touch sinners, but sin never touched Him. He was totally undefiled. When the Bible calls Jesus the “light of the world,” it’s a reminder of the sinless, stainless purity of the Son of God. This Christmas, as we behold Jesus, the light of the world, think about His incorruptible purity.

Prayer Time

Activity: Take a scoop of dirt from a potted plant and put it in a glass of pure water. Swirl the dirt around and shine a flashlight through the glass as you explain that the light is untouched by the dirt. Pray that the purity of Jesus’ light will shine through you in the new year ahead.

Tenth Day of Advent - December 8

“The Constant Light”

Scripture Reading: John 1:2-3, James 1:17

This Christmas, let's celebrate the constancy of the light that shined into the world when Jesus was born of the Virgin Mary. God cannot change. He declared through the prophet Malachi, “I am the Lord, I do not change” (Malachi 3:6). In the natural world, the speed of light is a constant. When Albert Einstein formulated his famous theory of relativity, he said he was able to put forward this theory because there is one thing alone in the world that is constant: the speed of light. Everything else is relative. Light is the only thing that is constant in the natural universe. And Jesus is our constant in the spiritual realm. Even the sun, which has never failed to provide its light since God created it, will one day cease to shine. The light of Jesus, however, will light heaven throughout all eternity! One day we will bask in the direct rays of Jesus' glorious light forever. Praise God for the changeless, constant light of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Prayer Time

Activity: Find a picture of something that expresses your joy over the fact that Jesus never changes.

Eleventh Day of Advent - December 9

“The Powerful Light”

Scripture Reading: John 1:4, I John 5:11

Light and life are interwoven. When God brought life out of chaos in creation, He said, “Let there be light” (Genesis 1:3). When the light appeared, the seas began to swarm with life. The seeds of earth began to blossom. When Jesus was born, He came to give us life. When the Holy Spirit shined the light of the Gospel into our hearts, a divine process took place, producing life where before there was only death. The light and life went out of Adam's race when he sinned in the Garden of Eden. But when we come to Christ, the Lord comes in and turns on the light, and life begins again. Jesus is the Light of the World. The little Babe in Bethlehem turned on the light and gave us eternal life.

Prayer Time

Activity: Go into an inner room in your home and make it as dark as possible. Then turn out the light and, after 30 seconds, light a single match. Reflect on how light overcomes darkness and how Jesus has brought us eternal life, overcoming the darkness of sin.

Twelfth Day of Advent - December 10

“The Victorious Light”

Scripture Reading: Matthew 2:13; John 1:5

What does John mean, in John 1:5, when he says that the darkness could not “understand” or “comprehend” the light? This word has also been rendered “overcome,” “put out,” or “extinguished.” What John is talking about is the victory of light over darkness. All of history is really a battle between light and darkness. We see it even at the birth of Jesus in the account of King Herod’s murderous rampage against the baby boys in Bethlehem. The darkness attempted to extinguish God’s light. If you were in a dark room and wanted to get rid of the darkness, would you take a vacuum cleaner and vacuum the darkness out? Would you take a shovel and shovel it out? Of course not. All you have to do to conquer darkness is turn on the light. When you do that the darkness flees. It cannot stay. It is totally powerless against the light. No one can overcome or extinguish the Lord’s light. In Him there is victory, at Christmas and every other season of the year!

Prayer Time

Activity: Imagine you are a shepherd in Bethlehem on the night Jesus was born when the light of God burst through the darkness. Reflect on what must have happened that night and how you would have felt.

Thirteenth Day of Advent - December 11

“The Glorious Light”

Scripture Reading: John 1:9-14

Do you know what glory is? It is the outshining of the light of Jesus’ grace and truth. It’s the “shekinah,” the glory of God that filled first the tabernacle, and then the temple of God in the Old Testament. The glory is the light of God that is in Jesus Christ, who is Himself fully God. Do you know that light is made up of a spectrum of seven colors? The number seven reminds us of the perfection of God. When you put all seven of the colors of the spectrum together, the result is pure light, which speaks of the holiness of the Lord Jesus. Jesus is the one who makes everything colorful, everything glorious! He is the glory of God. And the good news is that if people without Christ will only look at Him, He will shine His light into their hearts. The Babe of Bethlehem is the Light of the World. He will dispel the darkness with the glory of His presence for anyone who will ask.

Prayer Time

Activity: Make a list of people you know who need Christ in their lives and begin praying that God will open their hearts to Jesus. Keep your list with you through the Christmas season and ask God to give you an opportunity to share the Gospel with these people.

Fourteenth Day of Advent— December 12

“The Bright Light”

Scripture Reading: Luke 2:25-32

As the wise men journeyed closer to Bethlehem and the star shown brighter and brighter, I can imagine their joy growing with every step towards the Christ child. The men, and so many others who had long anticipated the coming Christ., would finally experience the joy that the fulfillment of scriptures bring. (Matthew 2:9-12)

Through prophets and scriptures, God announced his gift of Jesus to a fallen world to redeem it. Before Jesus’ ascension to heaven, He announced He would come again to finalize God’s plan. And so we anticipate His return with ever-increasing joy. We must live that anticipation and share it with those around us through our actions and words, instead of burying it below the burdens and cares of this life. Joy comes in worship, Bible study, evangelism, fellowship and missions. Each of these daily disciplines brings us increased joy and closer to the Kingdom of God. We are to share our anticipation of Christ’s return so that others will experience the joy of eternity.

Prayer Time

Activity: Think about what gift you would have brought to Jesus in Bethlehem to bless him if money were no object. Reflect on the joy of giving to others.



Celebrating the Love of Jesus Christ

Third Week of Advent

December 13-December 19, 2020

Fifteenth Day of Advent - December 13

“Love Casts Out Fear”

Scripture Reading: I John 4:16-21

Sometimes fear is good. When we see a snake or approach a busy intersection fear helps us to be careful. But sometimes the things we are afraid of are just in our minds. Imaginary fears can keep us from being happy and growing the way God would like us to. As we grow in our love for God, many of our imaginary fears go away. The stronger our love for God becomes, the more we will be able to understand that He does not want to hide us from the world. God’s gift of love altered the world in the dark but was marked by a huge light in the sky. God split the darkness and He invites us not to be afraid. The candle light of the advent wreath reminds us that perfect love casts out fear.

Prayer Time

Activity: Read aloud following verses: Psalm 27:1; Proverbs 29:25; Mark 6:50; I John 4:18a. Choose one verse, write it on a card, and read it each day until Christmas.

Sixteenth Day of Advent - December 14

“Love Has No Enemies”

Scripture Reading: Matthew 5:43-48

Jesus’ intent is not to approve of the evil actions of people. Rather, He wants to challenge us not to sink to the level of hate and vengeance in our efforts to stop evil. But stop evil we must! However, if we resemble our enemy in the process, evil simply changes sides. On the other hand, if we restrain evil and hate evil deeds without hating the perpetrators, we will move toward the ideal that Jesus outlines in our scripture reading. Forgiveness and love continue to be important lessons for us to learn.

Prayer Time

Activity: Plan this week to look for ways to treat your enemy exactly the way God has treated you. Actually, love has no enemies. Write a note of encouragement to someone who needs it whether they are your friend or not.

Seventeenth Day of Advent - December 15

“Love is Generous”

Scripture Reading: Mark 6:34-44

In our scriptures for today we see that Jesus was surrounded by hungry people. Jesus’ disciples wanted to send them away, but Jesus told them to give the people something to eat. They had little to give the people, but Jesus took it, blessed it, multiplied it, and all the people were fed. You see, love is generous! When we genuinely love people, we are concerned about their well-being. If people are hungry and we love them, then we will want to give them something to eat. We all have been blessed and God is calling us to share with those who have needs.

Prayer Time with Your Family

Activity: Look for at least one way this week to share the Lord’s blessing with another person. Then do it!

Eighteenth Day of Advent - December 16

“Love is Kind”

Scripture Reading: Luke 10:30-37

One thing that is true about love is that love is kind. That is what Jesus was telling us in the story of the Good Samaritan. We don’t expect robbers to be kind, but we do expect God’s people to be kind. In Jesus’ story, the people who should have helped the poor, beaten man ignored him and went on their way. That is not love. Jesus said what we as Christians should do is what the good Samaritan man did: show the love of God in us by loving people who hurt or are in need. When we love people and show them we love them through acts of kindness, we are showing them God’s love. Sharing God’s love is what Christmas is all about.

Prayer Time with Your Family

Activity: Brainstorm about specific ways you can help another family in need. Then do it!

Nineteenth Day of Advent - December 17

“Love Never Fails”

Scripture Reading: I Corinthians 13:1-8

God wanted the whole world to know about His love. He wanted to give the world a special gift that would show this love. God wanted the world to know how far He was willing to go to make His love available. He did all this by sending His son Jesus into the world.

Recite John 3:16 together. God’s love never fails. He does not quit or give up on us. He works diligently to bring us into His presence and into His will. God’s love never lets us down.

Prayer Time

Activity: Decide on two people for whom you can do a loving act at Christmas. Write their names down on a piece of paper and put a note on your refrigerator or set a reminder on your phone to remind you.

Twentieth Day of Advent - December 18

“Love Creates Hope”

Scripture Reading: Mark 2:1-12

The scriptures tell of a man who had never walked in his whole life. His friends would pray but he was trapped. How do you think he must have felt when his friends took him to Jesus? We can’t know for sure how the paralyzed man reacted to the idea, but we can know for sure what happened to his life. Through Jesus this man found a way out of his sad situation. When God sent Jesus into the world, He was saying to us loud and clear, “Don’t give up! There is hope for you. Don’t give up!” With Jesus, there is always a way out of our trouble. The love of God can always create hope in us.

Prayer Time

Activity: Make an acrostic with the letters H.O.P.E. or L.O.V.E. List a series of words, each one beginning with the appropriate letter, that relates to hope or love.

Examples:

H – has

L – long

O – only

O – open

P – perfect

V – victorious

E – effects

E – everywhere

Twenty-first Day of Advent - December 19

“God Is Love”

Scripture Reading: Luke 2:25-32

There has been much speculation about the account of Jesus' encounter with the adulterous woman that the Pharisees brought to Him (John 8:1-11). So steeped in the law, they tried to find fault in His doctrine. There have also been many accounts of what he must have written on the ground that day that made each of her accusers retreat. Knowing what would speak to them, perhaps He made reference to the Law. We know He addressed their sin verbally, but what if He simply wrote: God is Love. The power of God's love can transform individuals; its mention can also transform group dynamics. Whether in a group situation or participating in individual reflection, remember God's love for us and His commandment to love one another.

Prayer Time

Activity: Think about what you can do to show God's love to someone who does not know Jesus Christ as their personal Savior. Pray for opportunities.



Celebrating the Lamb of God, Jesus Christ

**Fourth Week of Advent
December 20-December 25, 2020**

Twenty-second Day of Advent - December 20

“The Lamb’s Sacrifice”

Scripture Reading: I John 1:29, 36; Revelation 5:6

Sometimes when we think of little lambs, we think of Easter. But what does a lamb have to do with Christmas? Of course, the shepherds came to worship Jesus, and they probably had lambs, but that’s not what this story is about. This is a story of a lamb who gives everything to save people.

Remember God’s special nation, the Israelites, the descendants of Abraham? At a special time when food was in short supply, they moved to a country called Egypt where food was plentiful. This place was not where God had told Abraham to locate His nation, so now the Israelites were no longer free.

Years later, God grew up a man to be his voice ... a man called Moses. When Moses stood before Pharaoh, the ruler of Egypt, he demanded that Pharaoh release God’s people. Pharaoh refused. God then instructed Moses to have each family in Israel sacrifice a lamb. The blood from these lambs would be used to mark the doorpost of each Hebrew home so that when the angel of death passed through Egypt, all the Israelites would be spared. Because of the lamb’s blood, God spared the Hebrew children. Yes, even then God was thinking about Christmas, because He knew that on day His Son, the true Lamb of God, would also give His blood for the sins of the world ... and what a Christmas gift it would be!

Prayer Time

Activity: What does the word “sacrifice” mean to you? Why do you think Pharaoh refused to let God’s people go? To be free, what are you willing to sacrifice?

Twenty-third Day of Advent - December 21

“The Lamb’s Life”

Scripture Reading: John 10:14, 15; Luke 2:18

God had chosen Moses not only to deliver the Hebrew children from Egypt, but also to lead them where God wanted them to go ... to the Promised Land! In the same way that Moses had once shepherded his sheep, guiding them to food, water, and safety, so he now would shepherd Israel from Egypt to the Promised Land. He even used his shepherd’s staff to lead the multitude of people, and like obedient sheep, they followed.

So what does Moses’ being a shepherd for God’s people have to do with Christmas? Well, it’s not unusual to think of shepherds at Christmas time. We read in God’s Word how the shepherds were the first to find the stable and worship the Son of God. But have you ever wondered why God sent His angels to tell the shepherds first? Could it be that God understands a shepherd’s heart? Could it be because He loves His people in a way very similar to the way a shepherd loves and cares for his sheep?

The Bible is full of shepherds—Abraham, Moses, David—and finally Jesus, the Good Shepherd. What do you think God would have us learn from these shepherds? He probably wants us to understand that we are like lost sheep in desperate need of a shepherd. In the same way the children of Israel needed a shepherd, Moses, to lead them to the Promised Land, we need Jesus to lead us to heaven. Perhaps on that first Christmas, the shepherds knew that Baby Jesus would one day grow up to be the Good Shepherd—the One who would lead us all into God’s Promised Land.

Prayer Time

Activity: If you have a nativity scene, pay specific attention to the shepherds and sheep. Reflect on the story of how Jesus grew up to be the Good Shepherd.

Twenty-fourth Day of Advent - December 22

“The Lamb’s Gift”

Scripture Reading: Exodus 20:1-17, Matthew 22:34-40

Like a faithful shepherd, Moses led the Israelites through the wilderness. It wasn’t an easy task, and the people didn’t always want to follow Moses’ leadership. Sometimes they disobeyed God and didn’t trust Him.

God loved the Israelites and had a plan to help them obey Him and to live together peacefully. He called Moses up to the top of a mountain to show him this plan. When Moses came down, he had a set of ten rules God had given to him. These rules were a special gift to the Hebrew children—a gift that would help them live in a way that would please God. We call these rules the Ten Commandments.

Now, when Jesus came to earth, God’s people were still doing their best to keep the Ten Commandments and follow God’s law. But Jesus told them there were really just two rules to live by. These were: “You must love the Lord your God with all your heart, all your soul, and all your mind ... and love your neighbor as yourself.”

These two rules are also like a gift, because God said if we obey these two rules we would be obeying the Ten Commandments—and all of the other rules. Now, which is easier to remember: ten rules or two? Of course, two rules are easier to remember, but that doesn’t mean they are easier to keep. In fact, God knew we couldn’t keep them, and that’s why Jesus came at just the right time.

These two rules are truly a gift, but only if we know Jesus. Then we have joy and peace— and much, much more! What a great Christmas gift!

Prayer Time

Activity: Write down at least five rules or laws that directly affect you. What do you think the world would be like if we had no rules or laws? What specific rules do you need help keeping?

Twenty-fifth Day of Advent - December 23

“The Lamb’s Satisfaction”

Scripture Reading: John 10:22-30

How many truly satisfied people do you know? How many people do you know who can say with Paul, “I have learned in whatever state I’m in to be content.” (Phil. 4:11) What satisfies one person may not satisfy another. We all define and achieve satisfaction in different ways.

In our search for satisfaction, this one thing I am sure of...our search for satisfaction will not be found at the end of the rainbow in a pot of gold. Where are you looking for satisfaction? How will you know when you have found it? And if you find it, will it last for eternity?

In the deepest recesses of our hearts and minds, there are hungers that cannot be satisfied by the things of this world. Only God can meet the longings of our hearts. Nothing can truly satisfy us apart from a personal relationship with Jesus Christ, our Lord and Savior. This is not because He forces us, but because He knows us and loves us. Who knows what will satisfy your deepest needs better than the One who made you? As your creator, He can see what your needs are going to be tomorrow and 10 years from tomorrow, and He certainly knows what you need today!

Prayer Time

Activity: Take inventory of your many blessings from God and give thanks for all God has provided. Make a list of all the riches that you have in Christ—things money cannot buy.



Twenty-sixth Day of Advent - December 24

“The Lamb is Sovereign”

Scripture Reading: Psalm 23

Every word in the Bible is a precious and sacred jewel. Never is that more true than in the crown jewels of Psalm 23. The first verse says it all...“The Lord is my shepherd...” When you see the phrase, “the Lord,” what comes to your mind? When David wrote this Psalm, he was thinking there was one God. Most ancient cultures had scores, if not hundreds, of gods. From the very beginning, David wanted to make it clear that the Lord is the one and only God. David sees him as “sovereign.” Sovereign means supreme. “The Lord” of Psalm 23 is the supreme God who is in total control of the universe and all that happens in your life.

In this passage, David uses a special word for Lord to refer to the Old Testament name that God gave Himself– YHWH (the Hebrew scripture had no vowels). Jehovah is the English translation of this name. It means “the self-existing One who never had a beginning– One who will never have an end– the great I AM.” He ever exists. He is always God. He is. He is the Shepherd.

Not only is He the Shepherd—He is your shepherd. He is my shepherd. He is all that, and so much more!

Prayer Time

Activity: Spend a few minutes worshipping the Lamb of God. Quietly sing the final lines of the Christmas carol, “O Come, All Ye Faithful,” adding these words, “For He alone is worthy, Christ the Lord.”

Twenty-seventh Day of Advent - December 25

“The Lamb Lives”

Scripture Reading: Hebrews 13:20-21

The Good Shepherd not only died for His sheep, He also lives for them. And that makes Him the Great Shepherd! The Good Shepherd was the One who willingly laid down His life for the sheep. Then, just as He said He would (John 10:18), He became the Great Shepherd– the risen King!

How does a flock benefit when their shepherd dies for them? Yes, he spent his precious life to save them, but the reality is, they are now left without him. They have lost their only source of protection! The sheep would have a painful and pitiful future if their story ended there. Praise God, our story has a happy ending. Christ is risen! The Great Shepherd is victoriously alive today. Hebrews says He has been “brought again from the dead.”

When the problems of your life are over your head, remember that they are under His feet. In I Corinthians 15:27, we are told, “For He (the Father) had put all things under his (Jesus’) feet.” Where is His head? He is in Heaven interceding for you. Where are your problems? Under His feet. The Lamb is risen and the Great Shepherd is waiting to return to you.

Prayer Time

Activity: List the duties of a shepherd regarding his responsibility for his sheep. Compare these to the many things Christ, the Great Shepherd, does for you. Then, praise Him for them all.

The Creche

The Nativity Scene

Traditionally, the origin of the creche is attributed to St. Francis of Assisi in 1223. Good Brother Francis was saddened by the ignorance of peasants in the Unbrian Hills. Unable to read, they did not know the story of Bethlehem's Babe. To them, Christmas was just another day. Then, he hit upon a way to tell them so they would never forget. He set up a stable in a cave behind the village church and filled it with real animals, hay, and a manger. Some stories say that he got a young couple of the village to play the parts of Mary and Joseph and asked them to bring their own baby to lie in the manger. Other sources say that the baby was always a village orphan because Brother Francis knew that after that night the child would always be treated well. In any event, the villagers saw for themselves the Christmas story. God became flesh in circumstances just like theirs.

Since that time, people the world over have set up the Christmas story at home and at church. To make this custom a true part of the Advent season, begin the first day with the empty stable and fill it day by day until Christmas Eve when the tiny Christ figure is at last laid in his bed. During our Advent journey, let the figures travel about the home, church, or room on their journey to the stall. Waiting until Epiphany for the Wise Men to finish their journey will keep the sense of excitement alive for children. A simple, but meaningful order can be found in *Jesus' Nativity*, by Robert W. Lourwood included in *More Services for Special Days*, available at Christian bookstores.

Stories about animals and Jesus' birth abound today, even as they did long ago. In earlier times, the belief was widespread that every living creature shared in the wonder of the Nativity. Children especially are drawn to these gentle stories, which have become a part of our own Christmas folklore.





FIRST BAPTIST
GARLAND

First Baptist Garland

801 W Avenue D • Garland, Texas 75040

972-276-7194 • fbcgarland.org