# ADVENT

## Making Room for the Whole Story

Westlife Church

November 29 - December 24, 2026



Welcome to an Advent journey of waiting, longing, and encountering Jesus!

Advent reminds us to pause in **hopeful anticipation**. It reminds us that Jesus entered a world that was not yet as it should be.

There was longing for deliverance. There were promises waiting to be fulfilled. There were people who had waited a long time and people who were about to have their lives changed unexpectedly.

Jesus didn't enter a perfect world populated by people whose lives were all going well. **He entered our kind of world. A world of joy and sorrow, uncertainty and expectation, brokenness and beauty.**

These daily reflections are meant to give you permission to bring your actual heart to Jesus.

Throughout this Advent journey, we'll explore the story of God's redemption, from the promises spoken throughout the Old Testament to their fulfilment in Jesus. As we read, we'll consider the historical context of each passage, what it reveals about God's character, and how it points us toward Jesus.

Not every promise or prophetic word in Scripture was spoken directly to us. Some were given to specific people, nation, or generations in particular circumstances. We want to understand these passages in their original context rather than assume every word applies to us in exactly the same way.

Yet, as we trace the **themes** of Scripture, **we discover the consistent character of God**. **We see His faithfulness, His mercy, His power to redeem, and His work of bringing light into darkness.** We see these truths woven throughout the biblical story and ultimately revealed in Jesus.

**As you read, ask yourself:** *What does this passage reveal about God? How does it point me toward Jesus? Is there a biblical truth here that I can hold onto, pray through, and speak over my own life?*

Our desire is not simply to read the Word, but to know it, understand it, and allow it to shape how we live and pray. May this Advent be an opportunity to grow deeper in Scripture and to become more rooted in the truth of who God is. You can do this alone or sit with loved ones and share what Jesus is highlighting to you.

# Week 1: Hope



## Day 1 - light the first candle

### ***Isaiah 9:2***

*The people who walk in darkness will see a great light. For those who live in a land of deep darkness, a light will shine.*

This passage was written in the 8th century BCE. The Assyrian Empire was expanding through brutal military campaigns, invading and devastating territories around Israel. The northern kingdom of Israel faced conquest, displacement, and the loss of its independence. Amid this fear, political instability, and spiritual darkness, **Isaiah spoke of a coming light**. His words offered hope that God had not abandoned His people and pointed toward a coming King who would bring lasting justice and peace.

Isaiah spoke of a great light shining into darkness. For some, those words may touch a place of deep longing. For others, this season may be filled with joy, answered prayers, and reminders of God's goodness.

Wherever you find yourself today, there is an invitation to draw closer to Jesus.

If life feels heavy right now, make a list to give to Jesus. Tell Him honestly where you need hope today. **Ask Him to breathe His great light into those areas.** As Isaiah spoke these words over a generation battling the darkness, speak these words over your body and soul.

If life feels full and beautiful, take a moment to recognize the goodness of God in this season. **You have likely seen Jesus breathe life and light over places of your story.** Scripture contains numerous passages highlighting the importance of remembrance, such as Psalm 103:2 or Psalm 77:11–12. Name the ways you've seen Him move powerfully in your story. Thank Him for the ways you see His faithfulness, and consider how you can remain rooted in Him when life is going well.

**Then pause and ask Jesus:**

*"Lord, how do You want to meet me in this season of my life? Help me to see You more clearly. May I be awake to what You're awake to."*

*Take a few quiet moments with Him. You don't need to rush. Simply make room for His presence.*

# Day 2 - light the first candle

***Genesis 12:2-3***

*I will make you into a great nation. I will bless you and make you famous, and you will be a blessing to others. I will bless those who bless you and curse those who treat you with contempt. All the families on earth will be blessed through you."*

God calls Abraham to leave his homeland and **journey into an unknown future**. God promises to make him into a great nation and declares that all the families of the earth will be blessed through him. This promise becomes a foundational part of God's unfolding plan to bring redemption to the world through Jesus.

Are you facing an unknown or uncertain season? Abraham had to step forward without knowing the whole journey. What might it look like to trust God with the next step, even when you can't see the whole picture?

Are you viewing God's blessings only in terms of what you receive, or are you also considering how you can be a blessing to others? Who might God be inviting you to encourage, serve, love or share His goodness with?

***Pause**: Take a moment to consider the blessings God has placed in your life. Where might you be holding tightly to what He has given you, rather than allowing it to flow through you to others? Ask God to help you recognize the opportunities around you to be a blessing.*

# Day 3 - light the first candle

***Genesis 15:5-6***

*Then the Lord took Abram outside and said to him, "Look up into the sky and count the stars if you can. That's how many descendants you will have!" And Abram believed the Lord, and the Lord counted him as righteous because of his faith.*

God promises Abraham descendants as numerous as the stars, even though Abraham and Sarah have no children and are growing older. Abraham believes God's promise despite the circumstances. **His story introduces the tension between what God has promised and what we can presently see.**

As the year comes to an end, how is your heart? Are you carrying the loss of someone you love - a first Christmas without them, or another Christmas when their absence is felt? Are you thinking about dreams lost, prayers unanswered or promises you're still waiting to see fulfilled? Or do you find your soul resting in gratefulness for what the Lord has done for you this year and throughout your life?

God is always worthy of our praise, and He is also fully present with us in our lament. We are blessed to have 150 Psalms that give language to the full range of the human experience, leading us in both lament and rejoicing. We don't have to hide our disappointment to worship Him, and we don't have to overlook our blessings to acknowledge our pain.

***Pause**: How is your heart as this year comes to a close? Take some time to be honest with God. If you are **waiting**, bring Him your disappointment and ask Him to **sustain your hope**. Isaiah speaks of God giving "beauty for ashes" to those who mourn — not as pressure to make grief beautiful, but as hope that God meets us in it. And remember, you were never meant to carry grief alone. Is there someone you trust whom you could invite to sit with you in your sorrow? You don't need them to fix it, explain it or find the silver lining. Sometimes we simply need someone willing to be present, to listen and to weep with us (Romans 12:15). There is a beautiful gift in having our grief witnessed, in being loved right where we are, without feeling the need to pretend we're okay. This is not a time to fix, but a time to grieve together.*

*If you are grateful, take time to praise Him and remember His faithfulness. And when life is good, don't keep your joy to yourself. Invite someone to celebrate with you, to rejoice in God's goodness and give thanks alongside you!*

# Day 4 - light the first candle

***Genesis 22:13-14***

*Then Abraham looked up and saw a ram caught by its horns in a thicket. So he took the ram and sacrificed it as a burnt offering in place of his son. Abraham named the place Yahweh-Yireh (which means "the Lord will provide"). To this day, people still use that name as a proverb: "On the mountain of the Lord it will be provided."*

God tests Abraham by asking him to offer his son Isaac. Just as Abraham is about to act, God provides a ram to take Isaac's place. Abraham names the place **The LORD Will Provide**. This story introduces a theme we see throughout Scripture: **God provides a sacrifice, pointing us toward Jesus, whom God gave to take away our sin.**

Just as one person may be known to some as "Mom," to others as "friend," and to others as "wife," God reveals Himself to us through many names. Jehovah Jireh is one of them, meaning **"The LORD Will Provide."**

***Pause**: Talk to God as Jehovah Jireh, the One who has provided for you and the One you are looking to for provision in this season.*

*Whether you are in a difficult season or a beautiful one, there is likely something you can praise Him for. How has He provided for you this year? How has He provided for you today? Count the miracles. Count the manna He gave you for today.*

# Day 5 - light the first candle

***Exodus 3:7-8***

*Then the Lord told him, "I have certainly seen the oppression of my people in Egypt. I have heard their cries of distress because of their harsh slave drivers. Yes, I am aware of their suffering. So I have come down to rescue them from the power of the Egyptians and lead them out of Egypt into their own fertile and spacious land. It is a land flowing with milk and honey—the land where the Canaanites, Hittites, Amorites, Perizzites, Hivites, and Jebusites now live.*

After generations of Israelite slavery in Egypt, God speaks to Moses from the burning bush. The Israelites' suffering was not just a story on a page. They were real people enduring real hardship and oppression. **God tells Moses that He has seen His people's suffering, heard their cries, and come to rescue them**. God had not forgotten His people and was preparing to lead them out of slavery. We see this same heart of God revealed in Jesus, who entered our suffering and came to rescue us from the power of sin and death.

Are you living with deep physical or emotional pain? Do you ever feel forgotten by God, as though your suffering goes unseen? In the Hebrew wording behind the phrase, "I have certainly seen," God repeats the word "**see**" (ra'oh ra'iti), ***emphasizing*** that He has seen His people's affliction.

The Hebrew word for "oppression" ('oni) describes a heavy, crushing state of misery and affliction, like the weight of a burden too great to carry.

God's seeing was not passive observation. He was fully attentive to their suffering, taking in the weight of all they endured. And His **seeing** was not disconnected from action. In the very next verse, He declares that He has come down to deliver them. Your pain is not hidden from Him. He *sees*, He *hears*, He *knows*, and He is *not* indifferent to your suffering.

***Pause**: Wherever you find yourself in this season of life, take a moment to recognize God's presence. If you are carrying pain, bring it honestly before Him, remembering that He sees you, hears you, and knows what you are enduring. If life is good and blessings are many, pause to thank Him for His faithfulness and the prayers He has answered.*

*We have the privilege of looking back at the Israelites' story and seeing how God brought them through their suffering, even when they couldn't see the outcome. Let their story remind you that God is present in every season. Can remembering His faithfulness breathe hope into your soul, whether you are waiting for Him in the hard places or rejoicing in His goodness?*

# Day 6 - light the first candle

***Exodus 12:13***

*But the blood on your doorposts will serve as a sign, marking the houses where you are staying. When I see the blood, I will pass over you. This plague of death will not touch you when I strike the land of Egypt.*

As God prepares to deliver Israel from Egypt, He instructs the Israelites to mark their doorposts with the blood of a lamb. The blood would serve as a sign, and judgment would pass over their homes. This became known as Passover, a defining moment in Israel's story of deliverance. It also points us forward to Jesus, the Lamb of God, whose blood brings us redemption and life. His blood reminds us that our hope is not found in what we can do to save ourselves, but in what He has done for us.

***Pause***: *The Israelites marked their doorways as an expression of trust in God's provision. Our homes are places where much of life unfolds: where we rest, raise families, experience joy, and sometimes face our greatest struggles. Take a moment to play worship and pray over your home. Invite God's presence into every room, pray for those who live there, and dedicate your household to Him.*

*You might even consider anointing your home with oil. Throughout Scripture, oil was used as a symbol of* ***consecration****, setting something apart for God's purposes. Anointing your doorways can be a tangible expression of dedicating your home to the Lord and inviting His presence, peace, and protection over those who live there.*

*Thank Jesus for the redemption we have through His blood, and ask Him to make your home a place where His love, peace, and presence are known.*

# Day 7 - light the first candle

***2 Samuel 7:16***

*Your house and your kingdom will continue before me*
*for all time, and your throne will be secure forever.'*

King David desires to build a house for God, but God makes a covenant promise to David about his royal family and kingdom. God promises that David's throne will endure. This covenant establishes the expectation of a coming King from David's line, ultimately fulfilled in Jesus, whose Kingdom will never end.

David wanted to build a house for God, but God had something greater in mind. Through Jesus, we have become temples of the Holy Spirit (1 Corinthians 6:19). Think about that for a moment. **The presence of God dwells within you!** His Kingdom is not simply something we look forward to one day; through Jesus, we are invited to live under His reign here and now. What a beautiful hope: **the King who was promised has come, His Kingdom endures, and His Spirit makes His home within us.**

So much in life can feel uncertain. Circumstances change, plans fall apart, and things we once depended on can shift. But God's promise to David reminds us that His Kingdom is not fragile, temporary, or dependent on changing circumstances. Jesus is the promised King, and His Kingdom will never end.

***Pause****: Where are you looking for security or placing your hope in things that cannot last? Take a moment to bring those things before God. Ask Him to anchor your heart in the unchanging promise of His everlasting Kingdom.*

# Week 2: Peace

## Day 8 - light two candles

***Isaiah 11:1-2***

*Out of the stump of David's family will grow a shoot — yes, a new Branch bearing fruit from the old root. And the Spirit of the Lord will rest on him — the Spirit of wisdom and understanding, the Spirit of counsel and might, the Spirit of knowledge and the fear of the Lord.*

Isaiah describes a ruler who will emerge from the family line of David. Unlike corrupt rulers, this coming King will be filled with the Spirit of the Lord and will **govern with divine wisdom, understanding, counsel, and strength**. This prophecy points to Jesus, **the promised King whose reign is marked by righteousness and peace**. His authority is trustworthy because His wisdom is perfect and His character is unchanging.

***Pause***: *Yesterday, we were reminded that through Jesus, the Holy Spirit makes His home within us. The same Spirit who rested upon Jesus now dwells in those who belong to Him. Are you inviting Him to shape the way you think, respond, and navigate life's challenges?*

Where do you need His wisdom, understanding, counsel, or strength today? Perhaps you are facing uncertainty, difficult decisions, or circumstances beyond your control.

***Pause***: *Ask Holy Spirit to grow these qualities in you and to deepen your trust in the One who rules with perfect wisdom. Remember, peace doesn't come from having everything figured out. It comes from **knowing** the One who does. May you be blessed with deeper intimacy with our Jesus in 2027.*

# Day 9 - light two candles

***Micah 5:2***

*But you, O Bethlehem Ephrathah, are only a small village among all the people of Judah. Yet a ruler of Israel, whose origins are in the distant past, will come from you on my behalf.*

During a period of political threat and uncertainty, Micah prophesies that a ruler for Israel will come from Bethlehem, **a small and seemingly insignificant town.** This prophecy later becomes an important sign identifying the birthplace of the Messiah. What seemed like an unlikely place was part of God's intentional plan. Even in uncertain times, God was faithfully working toward the fulfillment of **His promise** to send a King.

Is there an area of your life where uncertainty is stealing your peace? Perhaps you're waiting for an answer, wondering how things will work out, or struggling to see what God is doing. Micah reminds us that **God is at work even when we cannot see the bigger picture**. Bethlehem may have seemed an unlikely place for a King to come from, but God had a purpose all along. What might it look like to release your need to figure everything out and trust Him with what you cannot see?

***Pause***: *Take a moment to bring those uncertainties before Him and ask the Holy Spirit to reveal any lies you may be believing. Ask Him to settle your heart and reveal His truth in the situation. Renounce the lie and speak His truth.*

# Day 10 - light two candles

***Isaiah 40:1-2***

*"Comfort, comfort my people," says your God. "Speak tenderly to Jerusalem. Tell her that her sad days are gone and her sins are pardoned. Yes, the Lord has punished her twice over for all her sins."*

Isaiah speaks words of **comfort** to God's people, anticipating the end of their punishment and the restoration of their relationship with Him. After a season of suffering and separation, God speaks tenderly to His people, reminding them that He has not abandoned them. His words reveal His desire to restore and draw His people close again.

Christmas can often be a full season, where it's hard to take a moment to pause. It's possible we spend so much time speaking to others, responding to demands, and attending to the things around us that we can forget to pay attention to the words we're speaking over ourselves. Proverbs 18:21 tells us our words speak life or death. If you were to speak comfort to your soul or body today, what would that sound like?

Do you find it difficult to receive God's comfort? Perhaps you carry regret from past mistakes, feel weighed down by difficult circumstances, or struggle to believe that God still wants to draw near to you. Listen to His invitation: "Comfort, comfort my people." God does not turn away from those who come to Him. Through Jesus, we have been reconciled to Him and can draw near with confidence.

***Pause**: Think of one thing you've been carrying that has made it difficult to receive God's comfort. Perhaps it's a past mistake, something you wish you had done differently, or a thought about yourself that you've been repeating. Take a moment to bring that specific thing before God. Then read Isaiah 40:1 aloud, slowly, allowing His words of comfort to speak louder than the words you've been speaking over yourself.*

# Day 11 - light two candles

***Jeremiah 33:14-15***

*"The day will come, says the Lord, when I will do for Israel and Judah all the good things I have promised them. "In those days and at that time I will raise up a righteous descendant from King David's line. He will do what is just and right throughout the land.*

Jeremiah wrote these words **while imprisoned**, as Jerusalem **faced the threat of destruction** by Babylon. In the midst of uncertainty and a seemingly hopeless future, God **renewed** His promise to raise up a righteous descendant of David who would bring justice and righteousness. This promise pointed to Jesus, the Messiah, who would come to establish an everlasting kingdom.

This promise matters to us today because, through Jesus, we have been brought into God's family. We have been grafted into His people (Romans 11:17) and made partakers of the promises fulfilled in Christ. The hope Jeremiah spoke of is not simply a promise belonging to another time or generation. Jesus is our Righteous King, and because of Him, we can experience a peace that is not dependent on our circumstances, but rests in the certainty of who He is and the faithfulness of His promises.

Do you find yourself longing for peace in an area of your life right now? Perhaps circumstances feel uncertain, answers seem far away or you're struggling to see how things will work out. Or perhaps you're in a season of peace and stability. Wherever you find yourself, Jeremiah reminds us that God's promises remain certain, even when our circumstances change. The same God who promised a coming King has fulfilled that promise in Jesus. We can experience peace not because we know how everything will unfold, but because we know the One who holds our future.

***Pause**: Take a moment to consider where you are experiencing peace, or where you are longing for it. If something is unsettling your heart, bring that specific concern before Jesus. If you're in a peaceful season, take a moment to thank Him for it and recognize His faithfulness. Wherever you find yourself, remind yourself: Jesus is King. His promises are sure, and your future is held in His hands.*

# Day 12 - light two candles

***Malachi 3:1***

*"Look! I am sending my messenger, and he will prepare the way before me. Then the Lord you are seeking will suddenly come to his Temple. The messenger of the covenant, whom you look for so eagerly, is surely coming," says the Lord of Heaven's Armies.*

Malachi is the final book of the Old Testament and speaks to a community whose worship and faithfulness have grown weary (Malachi 1:13). Israel had returned from Babylonian exile, rebuilt the physical temple, and settled back in the land, **yet** spiritual apathy, corruption among the priests, moral fatigue, and cynicism had set in. Malachi announces that a messenger will prepare the way for the Lord's coming. **Centuries** later, the New Testament identifies John the Baptist as the messenger who prepares people for Jesus.

We're two weeks into December. The year is winding down, Christmas is approaching, calendars are filling, and people may be feeling physically, emotionally, and even spiritually tired. In the midst of it all, it's easy to become spiritually distracted or simply go through the motions. Do you feel your heart growing weary or your attention being pulled in a hundred different directions? Perhaps you're longing for a renewed sense of anticipation for God. Malachi reminds us that God was preparing the way for His coming. Advent invites us to do the same, making room in our hearts to welcome Jesus.

***Pause****: Look at the next few days ahead. Is there something you can intentionally set aside, even for a few minutes, to make room for Jesus? Perhaps it's putting your phone away, sitting quietly before Him, or reading today's Scripture without rushing. Invite Him to quiet the noise around you and renew your anticipation of His presence.*

*If you've already made room for stillness this Advent, don't rush past that gift. Take a moment to enjoy His presence, thank Him for the space you've created, and allow your anticipation of Jesus to deepen. Perhaps there's space for coffee or games with a friend, a slow walk or simply enjoying a moment without feeling the need to fill it.*

# Day 13 - light two candles

***Luke 1:13-17***

*But the angel said, "Don't be afraid, Zechariah! God has heard your prayer. Your wife, Elizabeth, will give you a son, and you are to name him John. You will have great joy and gladness, and many will rejoice at his birth, for he will be great in the eyes of the Lord. He must never touch wine or other alcoholic drinks. He will be filled with the Holy Spirit, even before his birth. And he will turn many Israelites to the Lord their God. He will be a man with the spirit and power of Elijah. He will prepare the people for the coming of the Lord. He will turn the hearts of the fathers to their children, and he will cause those who are rebellious to accept the wisdom of the godly."*

Approximately 400 years passed between Malachi's prophecy and the events recorded in the New Testament. Often referred to as the 400 years of **silence**, this was a period when no new prophetic books were added to Scripture. Yet God's promises had not been forgotten.

In Luke's Gospel, we meet Zechariah and Elizabeth, an older couple who have no children. An angel appears to Zechariah and announces that they will have a son, John, who will prepare the people for the coming of the Lord. What Malachi had foretold centuries earlier was beginning to unfold. **God's timing may not always align with ours, but His promises remain sure.**

***Pause***: *Is there something you've been waiting on God for? Perhaps you've been praying about it for some time and haven't seen an answer or know how things will unfold. Take a moment to look up a few Scriptures that remind you of God's faithfulness and write one or two down. Keep them somewhere you can return to when doubt or discouragement creeps in.*

*If you're not in a season of waiting, take this opportunity to write down a Scripture that reminds you of God's faithfulness and keep it close as a reminder of the One in whom your peace rests.*

# Day 14 - light two candles

***Luke 1:30-33***

*"Don't be afraid, Mary," the angel told her, "for you have found favour with God! You will conceive and give birth to a son, and you will name him Jesus. He will be very great and will be called the Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give him the throne of his ancestor David. And he will reign over Israel forever; his Kingdom will never end!"*

When the angel Gabriel appears to Mary, his first words are, **"Don't be afraid."** Before announcing what God is about to do, he speaks **peace** into a moment that must have been overwhelming for her. Gabriel then tells Mary that she will give birth to Jesus, who will be called the Son of the Most High. He will receive the throne of David and reign forever. The **long-awaited promise** of a King is now drawing near. God had not forgotten His promise to David, and generations later, Mary is being invited into its fulfilment.

God's promises don't always unfold the way we expect, or in the timing we imagine. Mary didn't know what lay ahead. How scared could she have been in the moment she was given this news? But she was being invited into something God had promised long before she was born.

***Pause***: ***"Don't be afraid, [your name], for you have found favour with God!"***

*Do you realize that you, too, have found favour with God? Scripture tells us that He sings over you (Zephaniah 3:17), He delights in you (Psalm 149:4), He wonderfully made you (Psalm 139:13-14), you are precious to Him (Isaiah 43:4), He takes pleasure in you (Psalm 147:11)!*

*Through Jesus, you are loved, welcomed and the recipient of His grace. His favour isn't something you have to strive for or earn. It's an expression of His goodness toward you. Let that sink in for a moment. You are seen, you are loved, you are not forgotten.*

*Take a moment to ask Him*: ***"Father, what song are You singing over me? What do You want me to know, deep in my soul, about how You see me and how much You love me?" Then sit with Him and listen.***

# Week 3: Joy

## Day 15 - light three candles

**Psalm 98:4-9**

*Shout to the Lord, all the earth; break out in praise and sing for joy! Sing your praise to the Lord with the harp, with the harp and melodious song, with trumpets and the sound of the ram's horn. Make a joyful symphony before the Lord, the King! Let the sea and everything in it shout his praise! Let the earth and all living things join in. Let the rivers clap their hands in glee! Let the hills sing out their songs of joy before the Lord, for he is coming to judge the earth. He will judge the world with justice, and the nations with fairness.*

Psalm 98 is a song of celebration, declaring God's salvation, faithfulness, and coming reign. The invitation to rejoice extends beyond Israel to the whole earth! The sea, rivers, and mountains are even pictured as joining in the celebration (*"...even the rocks will cry out!"* Luke 19:40).

Why? Because the Lord is coming to reign with righteousness and justice. This psalm is the inspiration behind the beloved hymn Joy to the World, written by Isaac Watts. The song isn't simply celebrating the birth of Jesus, but the coming of the King and the joy of His reign over all the earth.

***Pause**: Put on **Joy to the World** and don't just listen, participate! Lift your arms! And hey, if you're alone, nobody's watching! If you're with family, recruit them! Don't worry about looking silly. You're worshipping the King! Psalm 98 invites the whole earth to rejoice, and sometimes we need to engage our bodies in our worship, not just our hearts and minds. **Movement can actually help lift our mood by stimulating feel-good chemicals in our brains**. And isn't it just like God, in His kindness, to give us a garment of praise instead of a spirit of heaviness (Isaiah 61:3)? Sometimes we need to move our bodies, lift our voices, and remind our souls of who He is.*

*So don't just read about rejoicing today. Let's put some joy into motion!*

*THE KING HAS COME. REJOICE!*

# Day 16 - light three candles

***Luke 1:41-45***

*At the sound of Mary's greeting, Elizabeth's child leaped within her, and Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit. Elizabeth gave a glad cry and exclaimed to Mary, "God has blessed you above all women, and your child is blessed. Why am I so honoured, that the mother of my Lord should visit me? When I heard your greeting, the baby in my womb jumped for joy. You are blessed because you believed that the Lord would do what he said."*

Mary visits her relative Elizabeth, who is also expecting a child. When Elizabeth hears Mary's greeting, the baby leaps in her womb, and Elizabeth is filled with the Holy Spirit. She recognizes the significance of Mary's unborn child and blesses her for believing God's promise. What a beautiful moment of shared joy! Elizabeth doesn't just recognize what God is doing, she speaks encouragement and affirmation over Mary. Their meeting reminds us of the joy that comes when we recognize and celebrate God's work, both in our own lives and in the lives of others.

***Pause***: *Elizabeth's words were an encouragement to Mary at a significant moment in her journey. What a beautiful reminder of* ***the power our words can carry****!*

*In 2026, Pastor Randall shared this challenge:* ***"I want to speak an encouraging word that has the person thinking about it for the rest of the week. May we be a people that are marked by wholesome talk... may we build each other up."***

*What if we took that to heart today? Who could use an encouraging word from you? Ask the Holy Spirit to bring someone to mind, and then take the time to speak life, affirm what you see God doing in them, and build them up.*

# Day 17 - light three candles

***Luke 1:46-49***

*Mary responded, "Oh, how my soul praises the Lord. How my spirit rejoices in God my Saviour! For he took notice of his lowly servant girl, and from now on all generations will call me blessed. For the Mighty One is holy, and he has done great things for me."*

Mary responds to God's calling with a beautiful song of praise, often called *the Magnificat*. **Rather than focusing on the enormity of what is happening to her, she turns her attention to God.** She celebrates His mercy, faithfulness, and mighty works, recognizing that He has looked with favour on her despite her humble position. **Mary understands that what God is doing is so much bigger than herself. Her joy isn't rooted in her circumstances or status, but in who God is.**

***Pause**: What is taking up the most space in your thoughts today? Your circumstances, your concerns, your unanswered questions, or the goodness of God?*

*Mary's response reminds us to turn our attention toward the goodness of God. Whether you're walking through a difficult season or enjoying a season of blessing, there is always reason to magnify Him!*

*Take a moment to reflect on what God has done in your life. Where have you seen His goodness, mercy, and faithfulness? What are you grateful for today?*

*Like Mary, let your soul magnify the Lord! Don't rush past the goodness. Stop, recognize it, and give Him praise!*

# Day 18 - light three candles

***Luke 1:68-70***

*"Praise the Lord, the God of Israel, because he has visited and redeemed his people. He has sent us a mighty Saviour from the royal line of his servant David, just as he promised through his holy prophets long ago.*

After the birth of John, Zechariah's ability to speak is restored, and his first response is to praise God! His song celebrates God's faithfulness in remembering His covenant and sending a mighty Saviour from the family line of David. **These events weren't happening in isolation. They were the unfolding of promises God had made generations earlier.** What was a long wait was now becoming a reality. **God had not forgotten His people, and He had not forgotten His promises.**

Have you ever looked back and recognized God's faithfulness in something you didn't understand at the time? Perhaps something you prayed for, waited for, or wondered if God had forgotten. Take a moment to remember.

Or perhaps you're in a season of waiting. You're holding onto something you believe God has spoken, but you're not sure how or when it will come to pass. Take heart. The same God who remembered His promises to generations before us is faithful today. You haven't been forgotten, and His faithfulness hasn't changed.

***Pause**: Zechariah's words remind us of the power of speaking God's truth and promises over one another. Regardless if this is a season of fulfillment or waiting - is there someone in your life whose faith you trust? Invite them to pray over you, speak words of encouragement, or share what they sense God wants you to know. Be open to receiving blessing, encouragement, and even prophetic words.*

*And perhaps there's someone God is prompting you to encourage. Don't hold back from speaking life!*

*Let's be people who remind one another of God's faithfulness and help each other hold onto His promises.*

# Day 19 - light three candles

***Luke 2:4-7***

*And because Joseph was a descendant of King David, he had to go to Bethlehem in Judea, David's ancient home. He traveled there from the village of Nazareth in Galilee. He took with him Mary, to whom he was engaged, who was now expecting a child. And while they were there, the time came for her baby to be born. She gave birth to her firstborn son. She wrapped him snugly in strips of cloth and laid him in a manger, because there was no lodging available for them.*

A Roman census brings Joseph and Mary to Bethlehem, the city of David, fulfilling God's promise of a coming King. There, Jesus is born and laid in a manger because there is no lodging available to them. The long-awaited Messiah has entered the world, not with earthly grandeur, but in humility. **The greatest reason for joy has arrived, even before the world knows it.**

Sometimes the greatest things God is doing doesn't arrive the way we expect. Can we recognise His goodness and find joy in His presence, even when the circumstances look ordinary?

Psalm 16:5-6 reminds us that **God Himself is our inheritance** – and here He is, in human form, entering our sin-filled world as an innocent baby. **The One who is our inheritance has come near.**

But this baby will grow into a toddler, a teenager, and eventually a man who will walk toward a cross. He came knowing what lay ahead. His birth was the beginning of a journey that would make a way for us to know Him, belong to Him, and share in the inheritance that is found in Him.

Perhaps this is a deeper joy than we sometimes consider. Our joy isn't simply found in what God does for us, but in God Himself. **The greatest gift isn't merely what He places in our hands, but that He has given us His presence.**

The King has come. Our inheritance has come near. And that is reason for great joy.

***Pause**: Acts 13:2 shows us that we can **minister** to the Lord. The Greek word leitourgeō describes an act of sacred service and worship, offering ourselves to Him in devotion. Take a moment to quiet Your heart. Think about the wonder of the manger. God Himself came near. Our inheritance entered our world as a baby, knowing the journey that lay ahead. Rather than bringing Him a list of requests, simply turn your attention toward Him. Thank Him. Love Him. Worship Him. Take a moment to minister to the One who gave Himself to us.*

# Day 20 - light three candles

***Luke 2:10-11***

*But the angel reassured them. "Don't be afraid!" he said. "I bring you good news that will bring great joy to all people. The Saviour—yes, the Messiah, the Lord—has been born today in Bethlehem, the city of David!*

An angel announces Jesus' birth to shepherds, declaring good news of great joy for all people! **The Saviour, Messiah, and Lord has arrived.** Yet heaven's announcement doesn't come first to kings or religious leaders, but to ordinary working people in the fields. God's invitation of joy is not reserved for the prominent or privileged. The promised Saviour has come for everyone.

The shepherds didn't receive a promise that life would suddenly become easier. They received news that changed everything because the Saviour had come.

For some of us, this Christmas comes after a deep loss. The good news of Jesus doesn't take away the ache or ask us to feel joyful before we're ready. It reminds us that we are not alone in our sorrow: our Saviour has come near.

***Pause**: Ask yourself, **"Is my joy rooted in what is happening around me, or in the reality that Jesus, my Saviour, has come?"***

*What feels most present in you today — joy, grief or both? Bring that honestly to Jesus.*

*If joy feels far away, you don't need to force it or condemn yourself. The angel's good news isn't a command to feel happy; it's the promise that Jesus has come. Our circumstances change, but He remains present and faithful.*

*Even in sorrow, our hope rests in who He is.*
*If gratitude comes today, what can you thank Him for? If it doesn't, you can simply sit with Him and bring Him your grief.*

# Day 21 - light three candles

## ***Luke 2:16-20***

*They hurried to the village and found Mary and Joseph. And there was the baby, lying in the manger. After seeing him, the shepherds told everyone what had happened and what the angel had said to them about this child. All who heard the shepherds' story were astonished, but Mary kept all these things in her heart and thought about them often.The shepherds went back to their flocks, glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen. It was just as the angel had told them.*

The shepherds hurry to Bethlehem and find Mary, Joseph, and the baby Jesus, just as the angel had said. Having encountered the promised Saviour, they share what they have heard and seen, then return glorifying and praising God. Their response reminds us that **joy moves us to respond!** When we encounter Jesus and become overwhelmed by the wonder of who He is, we can't help but respond. **Joy overflows into worship, praise and testimony.** Good news this wonderful was never meant to be kept to ourselves!

***Pause**: The shepherds couldn't keep the good news to themselves. Their encounter with Jesus overflowed into worship, praise and testimony. Joy moves us to respond!* ***When we are overwhelmed by the wonder of who Jesus is, we can't help but express it.***

*So, let's put that joy into action! Put on some upbeat, joy-filled worship music (Or see **THIS** Advent Playlist). Don't just listen - but sing, clap, dance, praise and celebrate! Let your heart respond to the greatest news ever announced: Jesus has come!*

*Let your joy overflow!*
Advent Worship Playlist:

# Week 4: Love



## Day 22 - light all candles

***John 1:1-5***

*In the beginning the **Word** already existed. The Word was with God, and the Word was God. He existed in the beginning with God. God created everything through him, and nothing was created except through him. The Word gave life to everything that was created, and his life brought light to everyone. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness can never extinguish it.*

John's Gospel reaches back before creation to reveal Jesus as the eternal Word, present with God and Himself divine. The word translated "**Word**" in John 1:1 is the Greek word Logos. This connects beautifully with the Hebrew word Dabar, meaning "word" or "spoken word" in english, used throughout the Old Testament to describe God's powerful and purposeful speech.

Psalm 33:6 tells us that the heavens were made by the ***word*** of the Lord. Now John reveals something extraordinary: **this Word is not simply something God speaks, but Someone**. Jesus is the eternal Word who was with God from the beginning and through whom all things were created. In Him is life, and that life is the light of humanity. The light shines in the darkness, a theme that connects the coming of Jesus to God's work throughout Scripture.

***Pause***: *Lectio Visio - Take a moment to imagine yourself in a room of complete darkness. Allow yourself to notice the darkness around you. You cannot see what is in the room. You may sense things are there, but they remain hidden from view.*

*Now picture a single light beginning to shine. You realize it's your secret place with Jesus. As the light fills the space, what do you begin to notice? What was hidden now becomes visible? Does anything look different in the light than it did in the darkness?*

*Notice how even the smallest light changes the room. The darkness cannot overcome it.*

*John tells us that Jesus is the Light that shines in the darkness, and the darkness can never extinguish it.*

*As you sit with this image, let it remind you that even when you cannot see Him, Jesus is present. His light is still shining. It reveals, illuminates, and reminds us that darkness never has the final word. Rest in the reality that the Light has come, and He is with you.*

# Day 23

## ***John 1:14***

*So the Word became human and made his home among us. He was full of unfailing love and faithfulness. And we have seen his glory, the glory of the Father's one and only Son.*

John declares that the eternal Word became human and made His home among us. The One who existed before creation stepped into our world, taking on flesh and experiencing life as we do. God did not remain distant from humanity's broken world. He came near. In Jesus, we see the glory of God revealed through grace and truth. The Creator came to dwell with His creation, making Himself known in a deeply personal way.

John tells us that the disciples saw Jesus' glory. God's glory speaks of the greatness of who He is, His nature, character, goodness and presence. When Jesus came, He made the Father known. In Jesus, we see what God is like.

But God's glory isn't something we simply read about or admire. 2 Corinthians 3:18 tells us that as we behold the Lord's glory, we are being transformed into His image, becoming more like Him.

But what does it mean to behold the Lord? It means to fix our attention on Him, to look upon Him with wonder, to spend time getting to know Him and allowing our hearts to be captivated by who He is. It's more than simply knowing about Jesus, it's taking time to know Him personally.

***Pause***: *Take a moment to read 2 Corinthians 3:18 slowly. What does it mean for you to fix your attention on Jesus? How might spending time looking at Him, getting to know His heart and seeing the Father through Him, change the way you live? Now, let's put that into practice. Take a few moments to listen to* ***Angels (Glory to God)*** *by Phil Wickham.*

*As you listen, turn your attention towards Jesus. Think about the wonder of the Word becoming flesh, God coming near and revealing His glory to us. Don't just listen to the words, worship Him.*

*We may not have physically walked alongside Jesus as the disciples did, but we can know Him, behold Him and be transformed by His presence today.*

*The more we behold Him, the more we become like Him.*

# Day 24

## ***John 3:16-17***

*For this is how God loved the world: He gave his one and only Son, so that everyone who believes in him will not perish but have eternal life. God sent his Son into the world not to judge the world, but to save the world through him.*

Jesus reveals the heart of the Father and the **incredible** love He has for the world. God didn't send His Son to condemn humanity, but to save us through Him. **The birth of Jesus was never an isolated event.** It was part of God's much greater story of love and redemption, revealing just how far He was willing to go to bring us back to Himself.

Have I truly allowed myself to receive the love God has demonstrated through Jesus, or have I become so familiar with the words that I've lost the wonder of them?

***Pause**: Take a moment to read John 3:16-17 a few times but replace "the world" with your name. Read it slowly. Let the words sink in. Our words have the power to speak life, so speak this Scripture over your soul and body. Let the truth of God's love become personal.*

*Maybe there's pain in your story. Perhaps you've questioned where God was in a particular situation, struggled to understand why something happened, or even found yourself blaming Him. Maybe those experiences have made it difficult to trust His love. There's room for that too.*

*Are you willing to acknowledge that part of your story and bring it honestly before Jesus? You don't need to unpack everything or find all the answers right now. Simply invite Him into that place. Ask Him to help you see His heart towards you, to reveal His love and to make His presence known to you, even here.*

*If difficult emotions surface, you don't have to push further or work through everything in this moment. You can simply pause, turn your attention towards Jesus and rest in the truth of His love.*

*Remember, Jesus didn't come to condemn you, but to save you. His invitation is one of love. Let Him meet you right where you are.*

*Take a moment to receive again the love that sent Jesus into the world for you.*

# Day 25

***Romans 5:6-8***

*When we were utterly helpless, Christ came at just the right time and died for us sinners. Now, most people would not be willing to die for an upright person, though someone might perhaps be willing to die for a person who is especially good. But God showed his great love for us by sending Christ to die for us while we were still sinners.*

Paul reminds us that Christ didn't wait for humanity to become worthy of His love. Jesus died for us **while** we were still sinners, at the very moment we were powerless to save ourselves. God's love wasn't a response to our goodness or something we had to earn. He demonstrated His love by giving His Son for us while we were still broken, lost and in need of a Saviour. The cross is the ultimate demonstration that we are deeply loved, not because of what we have done, but because of who He is.

Romans 5 reminds us that Christ died for us while we were still powerless. We couldn't rescue ourselves or earn our way into God's love.

Think for a moment about a newborn baby. One that is completely dependent on someone else to feed, care for and provide for them. They cannot meet their own needs or make themselves worthy of that care. They simply need someone to love them and provide for them.

In many ways, this gives us a picture of our own need for Jesus. We can be tempted to think we're doing pretty well, that we're good people, or that we have most things under control. But where in your life do you recognise your need for Him? Where have you been trying to manage, fix or provide for yourself what only He can give?

***Pause***: *Take a moment to be honest with Him. You don't have to prove your goodness or hide your need. Jesus already knows, and He gave Himself for you while you were still powerless.*

*Read Romans 5:8 again. Let the wonder of this truth settle in your heart: God didn't wait for you to get it right before He demonstrated His love.*

# Day 26

***Revelation 21:1-5***

*Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the old heaven and the old earth had disappeared. And the sea was also gone. And I saw the holy city, the new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven like a bride beautifully dressed for her husband. I heard a loud shout from the throne, saying, "Look, God's home is now among his people! He will live with them, and they will be his people. God himself will be with them. He will wipe every tear from their eyes, and there will be no more death or sorrow or crying or pain. All these things are gone forever." And the one sitting on the throne said, "Look, I am making everything new!" And then he said to me, "Write this down, for what I tell you is trustworthy and true."*

John is given a glimpse of the future God has promised, a new heaven and a new earth, where God will dwell with His people. The story of redemption that began in the garden, continued through God's promises and was fulfilled through Jesus, moves towards this beautiful reality: God making **all things** new. Every consequence of sin, every sorrow, every tear and every pain will one day be gone. The One who came to dwell among us will ultimately dwell with us forever. And the promise is certain: ***"Look, I am making everything new!"***

***Pause:*** *Take a moment to read Revelation 21:1-5 slowly. Imagine this promised reality. No more death, sorrow, crying or pain. God dwelling with His people, and everything made new.*

*Throughout this Advent journey, we've been making room for the whole story. Not just the familiar story of a baby in a manger, but the much bigger story of God's love, redemption and restoration through Jesus.*

*And this story includes you! Through Jesus, you have been brought into God's family and invited to participate in His redemptive purposes. So, as Christmas day is upon us, consider this:* ***What might it look like to make room for God's purposes in your everyday life? Where might He be inviting you to carry His love, bring His light or make His goodness known?***

*His story is still unfolding. Jesus has come, redemption has been made possible, and one day He will make all things new.*

# A Christmas Blessing

As you celebrate Christmas, wherever you find yourself and whatever this season holds for you, may you know the nearness of Jesus.

Whether your home is full of laughter and celebration, or this season feels quieter, harder or different than you hoped, may you encounter the love of the One who came near. May the wonder of His coming never become ordinary, and may you continue to make room for the whole story.

Thank you for taking this Advent journey with us. Our prayer is that you've come to know Jesus a little more deeply, see His love a little more clearly, and discover afresh the beauty of being part of His story.

And the journey doesn't have to end here! We'd love you to join us as we continue exploring God's Word together through **The Bible Recap by Tara-Leigh Cobble** on **January 1.** We'll be following along together, reading through the Bible and discovering more of God's character and His redemptive story.

If you don't already have it, download the Bible App (YouVersion) and add Westlife as your church and join the Bible Recap!

Wishing you a Christmas filled with the wonder, peace and the joy of knowing Jesus. May His love meet you right where you are.

## Merry Christmas!




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