

ADVENT DEVOTIONAL

advent:

*the arrival of a notable
person, thing, or event*

A CHRISTMAS DEVOTIONAL GUIDE

Produced by Grace Bible Church, Killeen, TX

Adapted from Mystery Church, Joplin, MO

Illustrations by Abby Inge

Why Advent?

by Elliot Grudem via the Resurgence (www.theresurgence.com)

The Scriptures don't require us to do anything different during the Advent season. Recognizing Advent as individuals, families, or as a church doesn't make you better or more spiritual than a church that doesn't recognize Advent. That said, there are some real advantages for a church to recognize and celebrate the Advent season.

1. It's Expected

Individuals in your community expect the church to at least recognize something is different during the month of December. Traditions (individual and cultural) form people to observe this holiday season. Observing Advent can be one of the more subversive acts that a congregation can do. Because our culture still observes the Christmas season, there are a lot of natural connection points between the church and culture during the holiday season. How a church embodies its participation in the time and events of Advent can communicate a lot to the community around them about the importance of the story of Jesus.

2. It Tells the Story about Jesus

During Christmas time, Christians get a bunch of press as they fight over which words and religious symbols the culture must use to recognize the coming of the Prince of Peace. They put on elaborate pageants and concerts to celebrate the king who was born into poverty, in an obscure town, to a couple of young, first-time parents. The story of Jesus can get lost in the celebration. During Christmas time, those who have little to do with the church gather with family, host elaborate parties, decorate their houses, and give money and presents away. Again, the story of Jesus can get lost in the celebration. When you celebrate Advent through songs, Scripture readings, sermons, and the Lord's Supper, you get to tell God's great story of redemption. You can tell of the need for redemption highlighted throughout the entire Old Testament. You can tell of the coming of Jesus, "born a child and yet a king." You can tell of how the angels proclaimed and the Magi demonstrated the global implications of Jesus' birth. You can tell of how his now longed-for second coming will be horror for those who don't believe and wonder upon wonder for those who do believe. Advent gives your church a wonderful opportunity to tell the story of redemption from all the Scriptures.

3. It Tells the Whole Story

Advent is about much more than gifts and good deeds. The story isn't all fun and wonder. There is darkness and gloom. There is longing. There is joy and light. There is redemption and grace. There is judgment and final victory. In a way, recognizing Advent is expected. In another way, it's counter-cultural. Advent allows you to both show the horror of sin and the blessings Christ came to make known, "far as the curse is found." When you recognize the season of Advent, you get to talk about these things. You can help people understand why the in-breaking of God's kingdom through the birth of Jesus is "good news of a great joy that will be for all people" (Luke 2:10).

Advent Traditions

This devotional follows four themes often used with an Advent Wreath. An Advent Wreath often involves the lighting of different weekly candles for the four weeks prior to Christmas. It must be stressed that there are no Biblically commanded Christmas traditions beyond the command of 1 Corinthians 10:31 (to do all things to the glory of God). Some families light Advent Wreath Candles. Other families hang lights outside their house to declare that Jesus is the light of the world. People also decorate with evergreen boughs and trees to symbolize life in the midst of the death of winter. **The Adventure of Christmas** by Lisa Welchel, is a great book for rediscovering the Christian intent behind many American Christian traditions.

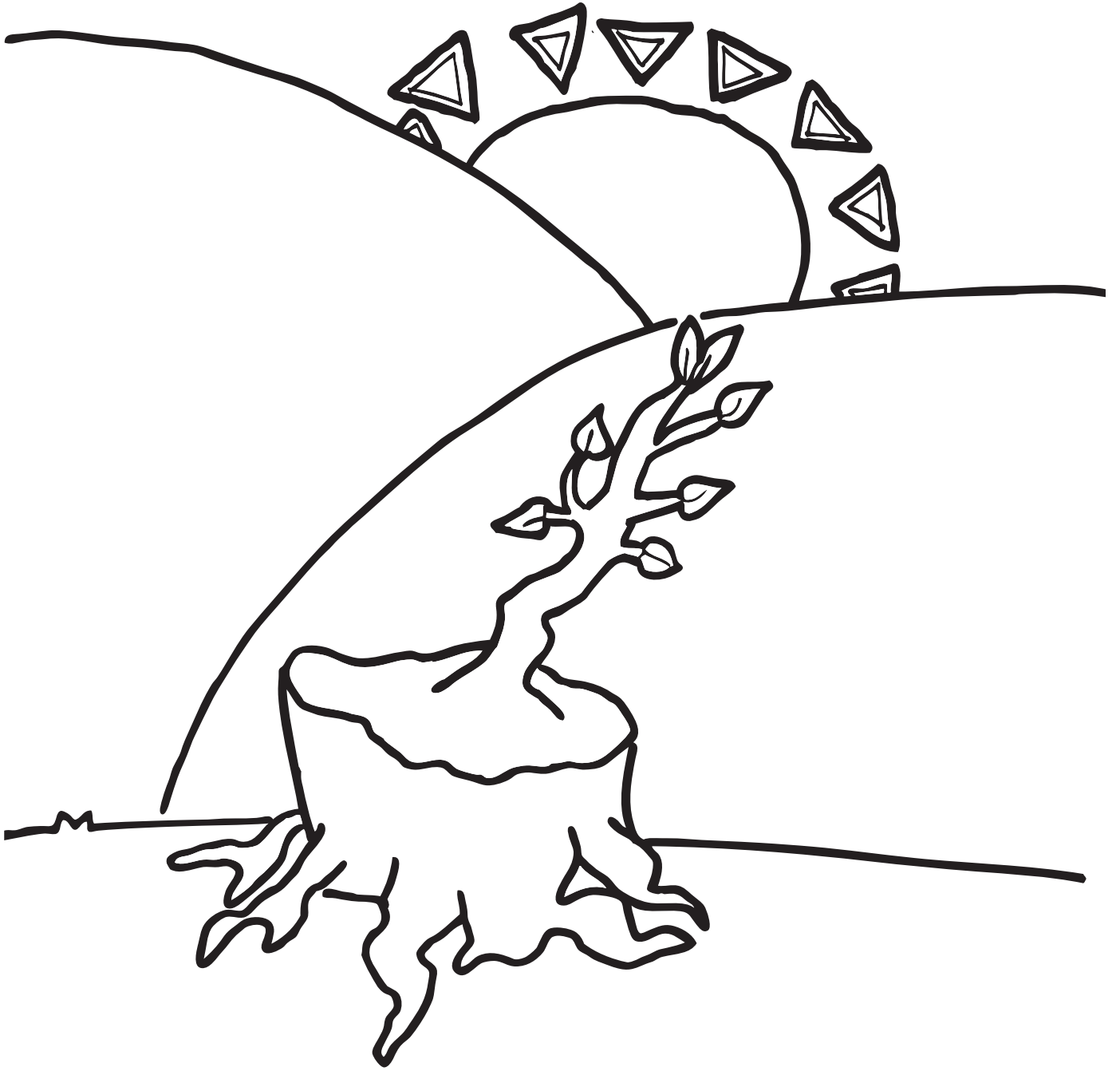
Using this Devotional

This devotional is a guide to help you focus on Christ during the Christmas season. There is one devotional reading for each week of Advent. Choose a specific time each week when you will do the devotion. Each devotion contains a passage of Scripture, a brief reflection on that passage, sample prayers, a suggested reading from Sally Lloyd-Jones' **Jesus Storybook Bible**, and hymns to sing together to give voice to your praises and longings. The devotional was designed to be read in community. So, whether you have a large family or live alone, we encourage you to find one or two (or more!) others and go through these devotions together during a time of family devotions, after a meal, or over the phone. Have your children color the illustrations, or make their own each week. You may want to display these or send them to friends and family as a way to remember and celebrate the Christmas season.

There are also *daily* scripture readings during each week if you want to do a deeper study of the themes surrounding the coming of Christ.

Week One

HOPE



HOPE...

God's people had been hoping for and expecting a king for a long time. The Lord had given them a promise through the prophet Isaiah long before Jesus was born, "Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign. Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel." (Isaiah 7:14) Isaiah also foretold that the Messiah – the One who would save God's people – would be a relative of a man named Jesse, the father of King David (Isaiah 11). Let's look at some passages from the New Testament that show how Jesus was the One that the Lord promised to send:

Scripture

Luke 1:26-38 & Matthew 1:1-17

Shedding some light...

God is always faithful to His promises! He is completely trustworthy, and will always do what He says He will do. No matter how dark our situation may be, we can have hope knowing that our Heavenly Father is in control and will fulfill His promises. In our sin we are tempted to not believe God, and to put our hope and trust in someone or something other than Him. How do we need to live this week in order to believe God's promises and hope in Him?

Children's Prayer

Jesus, thank you for always being faithful and keeping your promises. Help me to believe in You and to honor you by doing what I say I will do.

Adult's Prayer

Father you are always faithful and true. Thank you for your faithfulness. Forgive us when we are unfaithful, forgive us when we do not keep our word. Help us trust your promises and place our hope in you.

Jesus Storybook Bible

Get Ready! 170-175

Daily Scripture Readings:

First Week of Advent

Sunday, November 27 – Romans 13:11-14

Monday, November 28 – 1 Corinthians 1:3-9

Tuesday, November 29 – Mark 13:33-37

Wednesday, November 30 – John 1:1-5

Thursday, December 1 – John 1:6-9

Friday, December 2 – Jeremiah 33:14-16

Saturday, December 3 – Isaiah 60:19-22

Song – O Come O Come Emmanuel

O come, O come, Emmanuel
And ransom captive Israel
That mourns in lonely exile here
Until the Son of God appear

Chorus

*Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel
Shall come to thee, O Israel.*

O come, Thou Rod of Jesse, free
Thine own from Satan's tyranny
From depths of Hell Thy people save
And give them victory o'er the grave
O come, Thou Day-Spring, come and cheer
Our spirits by Thine advent here
Disperse the gloomy clouds of night
And death's dark shadows put to flight.

Week Two
LOVE



LOVE...

God's children had been disobedient. They had gone against what He wanted for them, and so they were lost and lonely. As we saw last week though, there is always hope because God is always faithful. Not only is God faithful, He also loves. He is so loving that He actually *is* LOVE (1 John 4:8). God's people had disobeyed and had run away from Him, but in love God sent His Son to rescue them:

Scripture

Matthew 1:18-25 & Luke 2:1-7

Shedding some light...

What do you do for those you love? How do you respond when they are unloving toward you? Consider these well known words of Jesus from the Gospel of John: "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him."

Jesus came to save that which had been lost! That is great news! How can we live this week to celebrate and honor what God has done for us in Jesus?

Children's Prayer

Jesus, thank You for coming to earth to save us. Thank you for loving us so much that you would come to rescue us. Help me to love others the way I have been loved by You.

Adults Prayer

Father, thank You for sending Your Son Jesus into the world to save us. Your love for us is amazing and undeserved. Forgive us for when we are unloving toward other people. Help us love others this week in a way that brings honor to You.

Jesus Storybook Bible

He's Here! 176-183

Daily Scripture Readings:

Second Week of Advent

Sunday, December 4 – Romans 15:4-13

Monday, December 5 – Psalm 43:3-6

Tuesday, December 6 – Psalm 27:1-4

Wednesday, December 7 – Psalm 119:105-106

Thursday, December 9 – John 12:35-36

Friday, December 9 – Ephesians 5:6-14

Saturday, December 10 – 1 Peter 2:5-9

Song – Once In Royal David's City

Once in royal David's city,
Stood a lowly cattle shed,
Where a mother laid her Baby,
In a manger for His bed:
Mary was that mother mild,
Jesus Christ, her little Child.
He came down to earth from heaven,
Who is God and Lord of all,
And His shelter was a stable,
And His cradle was a stall:
With the poor, and mean, and lowly,
Lived on earth our Savior holy.
For He is our childhood's pattern;
Day by day, like us, He grew;
He was little, weak, and helpless,
Tears and smiles, like us He knew;
And He cares when we are sad,
And he shares when we are glad.
And our eyes at last shall see Him,
Through His own redeeming love;
For that Child so dear and gentle,
Is our Lord in heaven above:
And He leads His children on,
To the place where He has gone.

Week Three

JOY



JOY...

What brings you the most joy in your life? What is it that brings a smile to your face whenever you think about it? God sending His Son Jesus was and is incredible news of great joy. The King of the universe coming to earth was a big deal, and it brought joy to many people who saw what God was doing:

Scripture

Matthew 2:1-12

Shedding some light...

When the world was lost and without hope, God sent Jesus to find us and bring us joy! Everything He does is for His glory and our joy. The wise men rejoiced when the star led them to where Jesus was. Knowing who He was, they brought gifts to Him and worshipped Him. How does Jesus give you joy? What gift can you give Him this week as a way of worshipping Him?

Children's Prayer

Jesus, you are the King of the world. Only You can bring me true joy. Help me to worship You and to share the joy you give with my friends.

Adult's Prayer

Father, we are tempted to try and find our joy in something other than you. Help us to not believe the lie that anything other than you satisfies. May we worship You this week and offer our gifts, talents, and treasures to You, knowing that You alone bring true and lasting joy.

Jesus Storybook Bible

The King of All Kings 192-199

Daily Scripture Readings:

Third Week of Advent

Sunday, December 11 – Isaiah 60:1-3

Monday, December 12 – 2 Corinthians 4:3-6

Tuesday, December 13 – 1 John 1:4-7

Wednesday, December 14 – John 3:16-21

Thursday, December 15 – Isaiah 40:1-11

Friday, December 16 – John 9:1-7

Saturday, December 17 – Luke 3:1-6

Song – Joy to the World

(This recording is an alternate tune, feel free to sing the original!)

Joy, joy to the world, the Lord is come!

Let earth receive her King;

Let every heart prepare Him room,

And Heaven and nature sing,

And Heaven and nature sing, for Joy...

Joy to the earth, the Savior reigns!

Let men their songs employ;

While fields and floods, rocks, hills and plains

Repeat the sounding joy,

Repeat the sounding joy...oh Joy!

Joy, joy to the world He rules with truth and grace,

And makes the nations prove

The glories of His righteousness,

And wonders of His love,

And wonders of His love,

Week Four
PEACE



PEACE...

So far this Advent season, we have learned that God is faithful, and because of Him there is always HOPE. We have also learned that God sent His Son in order to save us because He is LOVE, and we saw last week that Jesus brings us true and lasting JOY. This week, our word is PEACE. Here is the dictionary definition of peace:

“Freedom from disturbance, quiet and tranquility.”

The world is a tumultuous place; there is strife and struggle everywhere – between friends and enemies alike. We need someone to bring peace to our hearts, minds, lives, and world. One night long ago, some unsuspecting shepherds were the first to hear the great news of God bringing exactly what we need:

Scripture

Luke 2:8-21

Shedding some light...

Where in your life do you struggle? What part of your life needs peace? Is there tension, anger, or bitterness between you and anyone? How should

Jesus coming to bring peace change your situation? How can you be someone who brings the peace of Christ to the places you go and the people you meet this week?

Children's Prayer

Jesus, thank you for coming to the world to bring peace. Help me to be peaceful with others. Help me to not argue and fight with my brother or sister, my mom and dad, and my friends.

Adult's Prayer

Father, thank You for Your peace. We are often quarrelsome and rebellious because we want our own way. Forgive us, and remind us of the peace we have with You through Your Son Jesus. Enable us to bring Your peace to the places where it is needed.

Jesus Storybook Bible

The Light of the Whole World 184-191

Daily Scripture Readings:

Fourth Week of Advent

Sunday, December 18 – Isaiah 11:1-10

Monday, December 19 – Zephaniah 3:14-17

Tuesday, December 20 – Matthew 1:18-25

Wednesday, December 21 – Luke 2:8-20

Thursday, December 22 – Matthew 4:14-16

Friday, December 23 – Isaiah 2:1-5

Saturday, December 24 – John 3:16-21

Song – Angels We Have Heard on High

Angels we have heard on high

Sweetly singing o'er the plains

And the mountains in reply

Echoing their joyous strains

Chorus

Gloria, in excelsis Deo!

Gloria, in excelsis Deo!

Shepherds why this jubilee?

Why your joyous strains prolong?

What the gladsome tidings be

Which inspire your heavenly song?

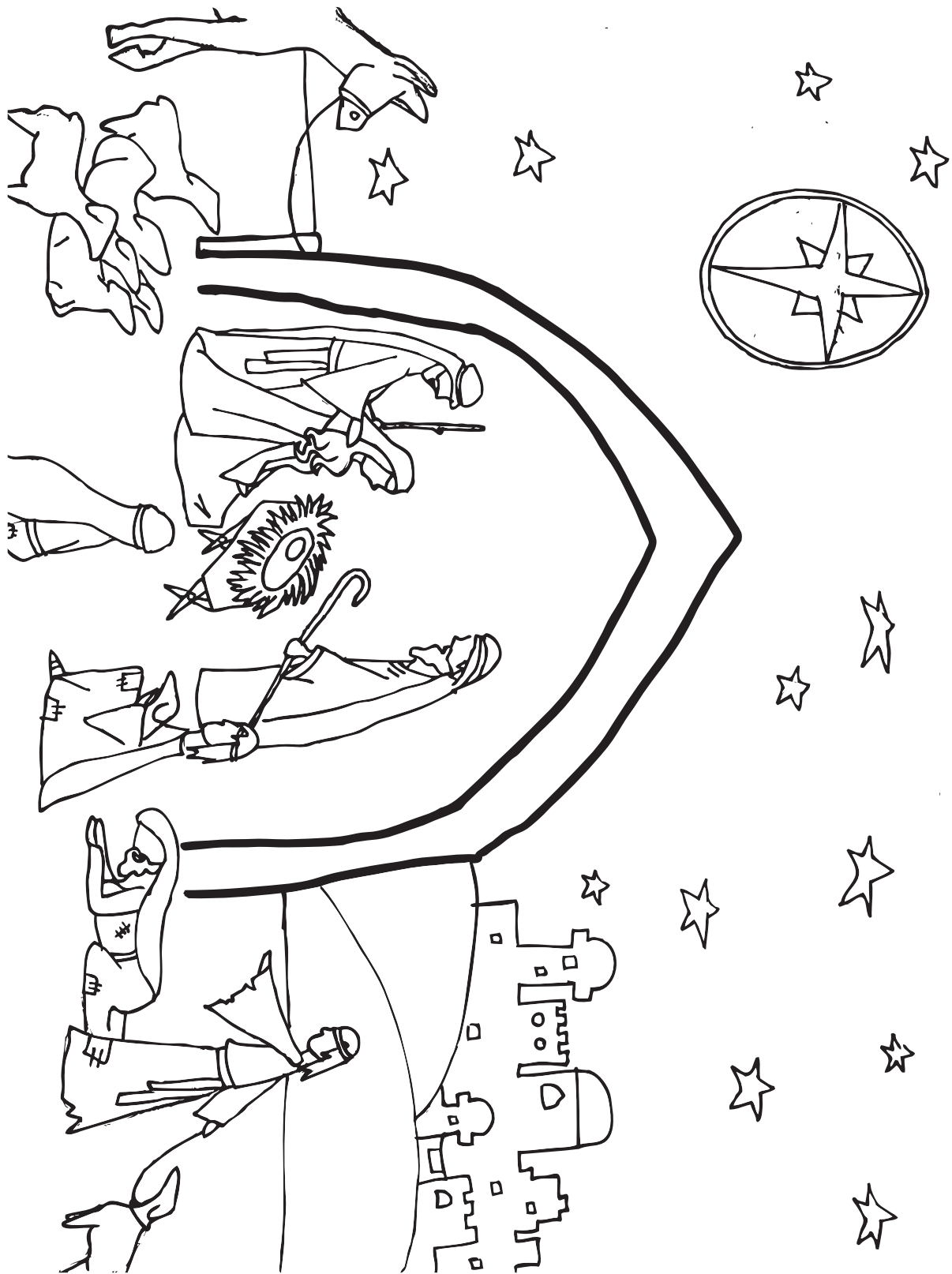
Come to Bethlehem and see

Him whose birth the angels sing

Come adore on bended knee

Christ the Lord the newborn King!

**CHRISTMAS
DAY!**



MERRY CHRISTMAS!

The King has Come! He's here! Isn't it wonderful news? Our hearts were just like the world – dark, joyless, and hopeless – but Jesus has broken through and brought HOPE, LOVE, JOY and PEACE to the world and to us! This is a day to celebrate! Let's read from the Gospel of John as we rejoice over Jesus' arrival:

Scripture

John 1:1-17

Shedding some light...

The King has indeed come! Jesus came to rescue and redeem His people, for God's glory, and for our joy! He is the light of the world, giving HOPE, LOVE, JOY, and PEACE to those who believe in Him. How has He given you those things? What are the gifts that God has given you through Jesus? How can you be someone who God uses to bring those same gifts to others?

Children's Prayer

Jesus, thank you for being the perfect present. Help me to share what you have done with my friends.

Adult's Prayer

Father, Your Son is an incredible gift of hope, love, joy, and peace. We do not deserve any of it, but you give freely. Thank you for your mercy and the glorious gift of your grace. May we live in a way that celebrates your goodness and testifies of your love.

Jesus Storybook Bible

Heaven Breaks Through 200-207