

ADVENT DEVOTIONAL

Week 3 - December 13-19, 2020



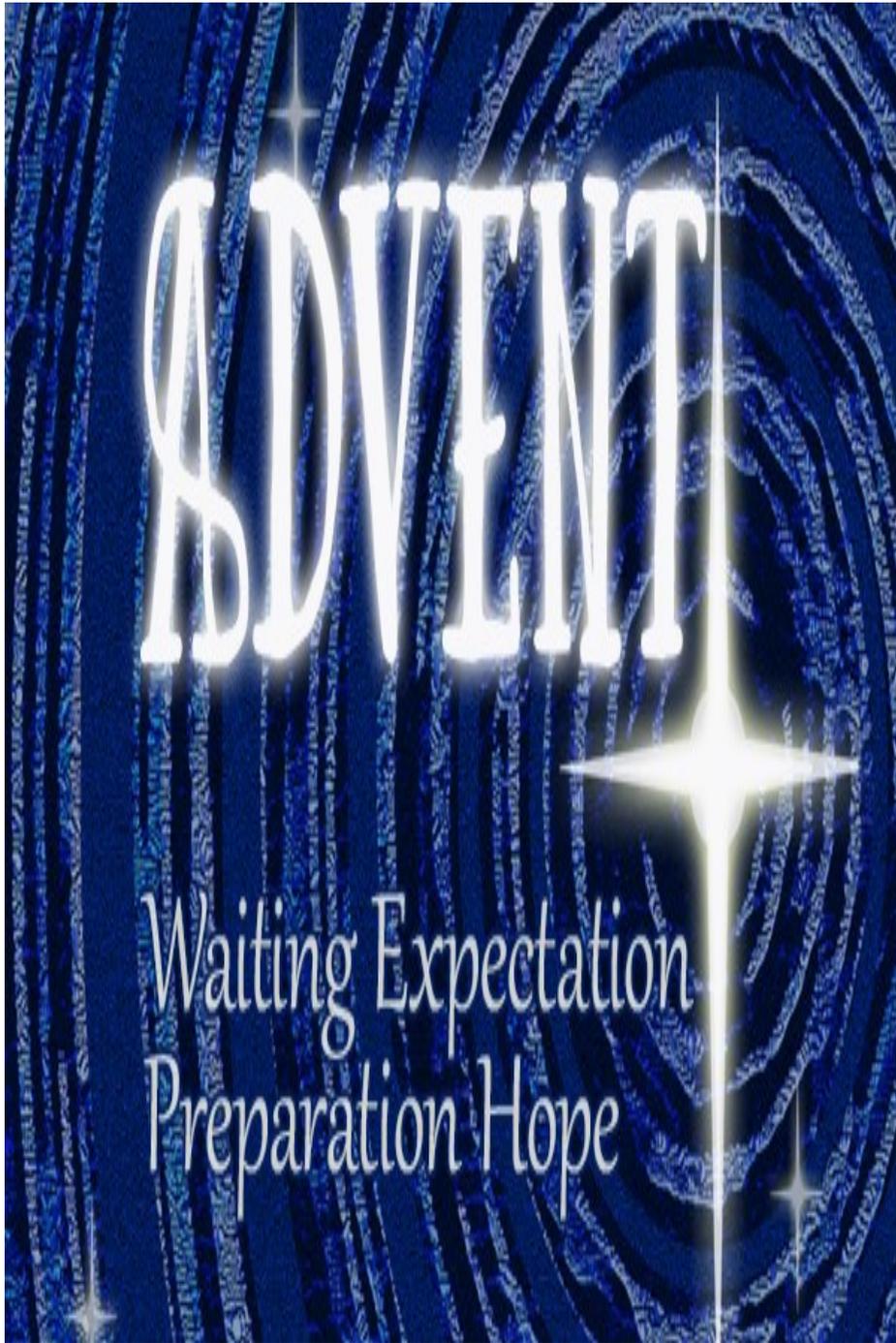
Reverend Dr. Darrell K. White, Pastor

Brenda T. Faison, Director of Christian Education

Bethlehem Baptist Church

7836 Fordson Road

Alexandria, (Gum Springs) Virginia 22306



NOTES

cont *John 7:40-52* The Present

all times, that is where you will experience victory when trouble comes your way (Psalm 46:1). Trust and obey God's word (Proverbs 3:5-6). Pray and do not worry about tomorrow, always allow His indwelling Holy Spirit to be your guide (Matthew 6:25-34). This is your defining moment and Jesus wants to know "Who do you say that I am?" (Matthew 16:15-17)

PRAYER *Lord, thank you for the Present, the one that is always with me. Amen.*



Greetings Bethlehem Family,

I am excited to extend this invitation to you to join your church family on a 2020 Advent devotional journey! This year's journey is marked and marred with challenges (as if we need more in the light of a national epidemic). In the aftermath of an international pandemic, national protests, and a divisive presidential election we are called to:

***HOPE** against hope that our lives and livelihood will return to a sense of normalcy;*

*Find **JOY** in the midst of despair and the untimely and unwarranted deaths of our love ones;*

*Work for **PEACE** and justice in face of systemic racism, sexism, gender discrimination, healthcare disparity, and economic inequity until Jesus returns; and*

*Go high with the **LOVE** of Christ when the enemy goes low preying on human fear, insecurity, and pride.*

We have a tedious journey ahead this month, however the rewards that await us at the finish line will overshadow all we will go through. With God on our side, we are assured that each round will go higher and higher. So much so that in the end, we will not look like what we have been through. Follow alongside in the daily readings, reflections, and prayers as God will each day prepare our hearts for the "GIFT that will keep on giving!" I hope to see you along the way!

Growing in Grace,

Pastor White

John 1:6-8; 19-28

“Who are you?” That is the question the leaders of the Temple in Jerusalem asked John the Baptist. They asked the question of John expecting him to claim that he was either someone famous or someone to be respected. The religious leaders were persistent in their goal to trap John with their questions. They asked him why he performed baptisms if he was not the Christ, Elijah or the Prophet. John told the leaders that there was one among them whom they did not know, and this One was powerful.

Today in a world that appears to have “gone mad”, we need to remind each other that Jesus is all powerful. He is not only our Savior but He is the “Emanuel”, God With Us. No matter what we may be going through, Jesus is with us. John the Baptist came on the scene before Jesus not to get everything decorated but to remind the world that the darkest forces in the world are not as powerful as our God. Jesus, the Messiah has overcome the world and will soon return.

PRAYER *Almighty God, you once called John the Baptist to give witness to the coming of your Son and to prepare His way. Help us to embody the Good News and to bless those who are struggling. Use us to offer hope and encouragement to those who are weary and heavy laden. Enable each of us to let your Joy radiate through us so that others may see You. Amen.*

John 7:40-52 The Present

***The people started taking sides against each other because of Jesus. ---
John 7:44***

Jesus was speaking about the Spirit which those who believed in Him would receive. When the crowd heard Jesus say this, some of them said, “He must be the Prophet!”¹ Others said, “He is the Messiah!” Others even said, “Can the Messiah come from Galilee?” [Read John 7:40-52]. Jesus was speaking as God’s gift to the world who came wrapped in humanity’s flesh. As Christians around the world prepare to celebrate Jesus’ birth they find themselves in a very similar situation as described by John, when the people started taking sides against each other because of Jesus’ claim that the Holy Spirit was coming.

God is still speaking. The people of today find themselves in the midst of a global virus pandemic with racial injustice continuing its murderous rage and the least of them are being left behind economically and socially. The 2020 presidential election results in the United States exposed the magnitude of American divisiveness and prejudices. The people are on opposing sides, but believers know Jesus as Lord over everything, and they wait for His return (John 14:1-3).

Jesus is *the Present* sent by God. Throughout Advent season, celebrate the one called Emmanuel, “*God with us*”. Remember to stay in *the Present* at



Cont **The Son is Greater Than the Angels** *Hebrews 1:5-14*

May we refocus our hearts and minds on the Biblical meaning of Christmas and the significance of the gift of God to mankind. God in His infinite wisdom initiated His redemption plan through His Son, which wholly satisfied His righteous wrath toward man. Hallelujah. Amen!

PRAYER *Our Father and Our God, Creator of the Heaven and earth, have mercy on us and guide us with your Spirit to repent. Renew in us a right spirit of worship and thanksgiving of the kind the Magi experienced when they visited Jesus in the stable in the city of Bethlehem. In the name of Jesus we pray, Amen!!!*



Monday, December 14

Brenda T. Faison

Matthew 21:28-32

My grandmother loved to read Bible stories to her grandchildren. One of her favorite Bible story was the one found in Matthew 21:28-32. She used this story to impress upon us the importance of (1) obeying your parents and (2) keeping your promise or your word. According to my grandmother, the first son in the story should have never said “no” to his father (no loving obedient child would do such a thing) but he redeemed himself by going and doing what the father asked him to do. The second son, however was an example of what children should never do. We should never fail to keep our promises.

Although this is a simple story it has a very powerful message. Failure to keep one’s promises or do as one is told can have very dire consequences. Today we are experiencing one of the worst pandemics that the world has ever faced possibly because of many people chose not to follow a simple direction (wear a mask and practice social distancing). Like the disobedient son, many of us have chosen to follow our own belief system rather than follow the guidance of scientist.

Jesus further states that even after the people saw righteousness demonstrated through John the Baptist, they chose to not believe. Let us pray this Advent season that our brothers, sisters, neighbors and the nation will see Jesus and chose to follow the truth.

PRAYER... God of our wear years, remind us this Advent Season that you are truly the reason for the Season. Help us to put our faith in You, the Creator and not in the things of this world. Amen.



Friday December 18 2020

Deacon Hezekiah Dority

The Son is Greater Than the Angels *Hebrews 1:5-14*

“For to which of the angels did He ever say: “You are My Son, Today I have begotten you”? * And again: “I will be to Him a Father, And He shall be to Me a Son”? Hebrews 1:5

The Son of God is superior to angels. Jesus is the image of the invisible God, the first born of all creation. For by Him are all things created that are in heaven and earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions, principalities or powers. All things were created through Him and for Him. He is before all things, and all things consist (Col. 1:15- 17).

Angels are created creatures whose purposes are to worship and serve God as ministering spirits.

There was the belief among Jewish converts to Christianity that angels were superior to Jesus. The author of Hebrews uses a series of Old Testaments Scriptures, e.g., ***2 Sam. 7:14; Deut. 32:34; Ps 104:4; Ps. 45:6-7; Is 61:1,3; Ps.102:25-27; Is.50:9; Is. 51:6; Ps.110:1; and Ps.103:20***, to show that God the Father declared Jesus Christ, the promised Messiah, to be the eternally begotten Son of God. Jesus the Son of God fulfills the prophecy of Genesis 3:15 which is manifest in Christ’s birth (who was both divine and human) as the light of world (*John 1:4*).

In society and culture today, too much attention is given to constant and recurring gratification and ever-changing materialism. In the Advent Season, there is a psychological disturbance that overcomes society in a false sense of Christmas. The holiness and joy of Christ’s birth are lost in commercialism and a misdirected focus on materialism.



Hebrews 1:1-4

Before any of us knew about or understood the concept of time, God in eternity past established His plan for you, all humanity and me. **Salvation!** God spoke his decree through the prophets, angels, audible voice, dreams, visions, and prophecy. Gods’ goal is the deliverances from the power and destructive effects of sin in our lives through faith in the death of his Son.

As we read, study, and pray the Holy Scriptures, we understand that God is still speaking today; it demonstrates how important we are to Him. God will never leave us alone. His love will always pursue us until the end of time as we know it. God will never forget about us because of the blood that Jesus shed on the cross.

Moreover, the Word and His power will overtake every hindrance and burden that so easily afflicts us in this life if we remain steadfast, fixed on his promises and the hope of Jesus’s return.

As we live out the balance of our assigned time on this planet, consider living a life that will bring honor to God the Father, through his Son, and guided by the Holy Spirit so that we can one day return home with honor! God’s ultimate plan for humanity is for man/woman to spend eternity with Him.

PRAYER..... Thank you Father for loving us. Help us to praise you daily with shouts of joy. In this season of Advent, help us to trust You more. Amen.



Acts 3:17-4:4

Through faith in the name of Jesus, this man was healed, and you know how crippled he was before, faith in Jesus, has healed him before your very eyes!

Acts 3:16 (NLT)

We live in an extraordinary world. A place in which everyone needs healing. Every human that resides on this planet, has an area (or areas) in his/her life where they are crippled, disabled or handicapped. Areas of healing come in many forms; mental, physical, spiritual, psychological, physiological as well as behaviors such as foul mouth, social media addiction, poor time management, bad diet (resulting in health problems, or a bad temper.

I invite you to read Acts 3:16 differently, using the exercise below. I have provided the Scripture with blanks. Fill in the blanks with your name, and replace the word crippled with your specific area in need of healing . Once you fill in the blanks, read the Scripture aloud.

Through faith in the name of Jesus, _____ was healed, and you know how crippled _____ was before, faith in Jesus, has healed _____ before your very eyes!

Now – how did that make you feel?

During this Advent season, reflect on an area in your life where you are crippled. Ask God for healing in that area and trust Him to answer your prayer.

PRAYER Dearest Father help me to identify those things in my life that need your healing touch. Enable me to trust You in all that I do. Amen.



Uncover the Truth

Mark 9:9-13

As they were coming down the mountain, Jesus gave them orders not to tell anyone what they had seen until the Son of Man had risen from the dead. They kept the matter to themselves, discussing what "rising from the dead" meant. Mark 9:9-10

The divine uncovering identity of Jesus in the Transfiguration was so breathtaking that Jesus gave the disciples an order to "not to tell anyone." The disciples were obedient even in the midst of their lack of understanding. This is a principle we can use in our personal life, "be obedient even in the midst of your lack of understanding".

The disciple had to wait to receive power after the Son of Man rose from the dead. It is the same transforming power of the Holy Spirit we experience today. Our spiritual transformation from the inside out, in Christ, has given us a lifestyle to live out our new nature. We should not allow ourselves to be pressed into following the corrupt customs, ungodly principles, or evil plans of action promoted by men.

The believer lives by the power of the age to come even while residing in this world. This is accomplished through God's gift of the Holy Spirit working to change our heart and mind from within, so that our obedience to God might be natural and immediate.

We have power from on high to conquer every temptation that comes against us. We have been given the power to carry out the assignment for the work of the ministry, to help those who are in need, and to share our testimony.



Let us rejoice with joy in our changed life because "Christ was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities; The chastisement for our peace was upon Him, And by His stripes we are healed."

Know in your heart that you have the confidence that God will do what He said He will do. As Jesus came, He will come again, so your confidence should be in His return. When we are attentive to God's voice and walk in obedience to His Word, we can find joy, encouragement, victory, and reward. I would like to leave with you a question "What encounters with God have you had in which you discovered something about both God and yourself?"

PRAYER...Almighty Creator, we praise you for this season of Advent. We thank you for the opportunity to reflect on the gift of your Son, Jesus the Christ. Continue to remind us of the joy that comes from serving You. Amen.

