First Presbyterian
Shreveport

ADVENT 2026

a SEASON of HOPE

Advent invites us to watch, prepare,
rejoice, and receive the love of God.
Each day, Scripture draws us closer to the hope
that comes into the world in Jesus Christ.

HOPE ✶ PEACE ✶ JOY ✶ LOVE

NOVEMBER 29 – DECEMBER 25, 2026



FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH OF SHREVEPORT

WEEK ONE · HOPE



Watch: God Is Not Finished | NOVEMBER 29 – DECEMBER 5

"Keep awake... for you do not know when the time will come." MARK 13:33

HYMN	"O Come, O Come, Emmanuel"
PRAYER	Ask for eyes to see God's promises without denying present suffering.
ACTION	Each day, encourage someone who may be facing uncertainty or carrying a concern. A thoughtful message, brief conversation, practical offer of help, or prayer can be a sign of hope.

NOV. 29 **MARK 13:24–37**

Stay awake

24 "But in those days, after that suffering, the sun will
be darkened, and the moon will not give its light, 25 and
the stars will be falling from heaven, and the powers in
the heavens will be shaken. 26 Then they will see 'the Son
of Man coming in clouds' with great power and glory.
27 Then he will send out the angels, and gather his elect
from the four winds, from the ends of the earth to the
ends of heaven. 28 "From the fig tree learn its lesson: as
soon as its branch becomes tender and puts forth its
leaves, you know that summer is near. 29 So also, when you
see these things taking place, you know that he is near,
at the very gates. 30 Truly I tell you, this generation will
not pass away until all these things have taken place. 31
Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not
pass away. 32 "But about that day or hour no one knows,
neither the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the
Father. 33 Beware, keep alert; for you do not know when
the time will come. 34 It is like a man going on a journey,
when he leaves home and puts his slaves in charge, each
with his work, and commands the doorkeeper to be on
the watch. 35 Therefore, keep awake—for you do not know
when the master of the house will come, in the evening, or
at midnight, or at cockcrow, or at dawn, 36 or else he may
find you asleep when he comes suddenly. 37 And what I say
to you I say to all: Keep awake."

REFLECTION

Advent begins not at the manger but beneath a darkened sky, where Jesus speaks of upheaval and calls his disciples to stay awake. His words are not an invitation to calculate the end but a summons to faithfulness in the present. Hope is not knowing what tomorrow holds. It is trusting the One who holds tomorrow—and living accordingly today.

PRACTICE

Notice one place where fear of tomorrow is stealing attention from today.

QUESTION

When worry about the future takes over, what helps me pay attention to God and to people today?



NOV. 30 MICAH 4:1–5

Learning peace

1 In days to come the mountain of the LORD's house shall
be established as the highest of the mountains, and shall
be raised up above the hills. Peoples shall stream to it, 2
and many nations shall come and say: "Come, let us go up
to the mountain of the LORD, to the house of the God of
Jacob; that he may teach us his ways and that we may walk
in his paths." For out of Zion shall go forth instruction,
and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem.
3 He shall judge between many peoples, and shall arbitrate
between strong nations far away; they shall beat their
swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning
hooks; nation shall not lift up sword against nation,
neither shall they learn war any more; 4 but they shall all
sit under their own vines and under their own fig trees,
and no one shall make them afraid; for the mouth of the
LORD of hosts has spoken. 5 For all the peoples walk, each
in the name of its god, but we will walk in the name of the
LORD our God forever and ever.

REFLECTION

Micah envisions a day when nations turn swords into plowshares and learn war no more. That last phrase is worth noticing: peace must be learned. God promises more than a pause in fighting; God calls people to practice a different way of living. What would change if we spent as much energy preparing to be neighbors as we spend preparing for enemies?

PRACTICE

Pray for people living with violence or conflict. Then choose one peaceful response in a conversation today.

QUESTION

When I disagree with someone, what makes it hard to listen or respond with kindness?

DEC. 1 MICAH 4:6–13

Gathering the scattered

6 In that day, says the LORD, I will assemble the lame and
gather those who have been driven away, and those whom
I have afflicted. 7 The lame I will make the remnant, and
those who were cast off, a strong nation; and the LORD
will reign over them in Mount Zion now and forevermore.
8 And you, O tower of the flock, hill of daughter Zion,
to you it shall come, the former dominion shall come,
the sovereignty of daughter Jerusalem. 9 Now why do you
cry aloud? Is there no king in you? Has your counselor
perished, that pangs have seized you like a woman in
labor? 10 Writhe and groan, O daughter Zion, like a
woman in labor; for now you shall go forth from the city
and camp in the open country; you shall go to Babylon.
There you shall be rescued, there the LORD will redeem
you from the hands of your enemies. 11 Now many nations
are assembled against you, saying, "Let her be profaned,
and let our eyes gaze upon Zion." 12 But they do not know
the thoughts of the LORD; they do not understand
his plan, that he has gathered them as sheaves to the
threshing floor. 13 Arise and thresh, O daughter Zion, for I
will make your horn iron and your hoofs bronze; you shall
beat in pieces many peoples, and shall devote their gain to
the LORD, their wealth to the Lord of the whole earth.

REFLECTION

God promises to gather the lame, the displaced, and those who have suffered. Significantly, the promise begins with people whom the powerful might overlook, even as the passage speaks honestly of struggle before deliverance. Biblical hope does not pretend that restoration comes without pain. It trusts that suffering and exile will not be the end of God's story.

PRACTICE

Think of someone who may feel left out. Pray for them and consider a way to include them.

QUESTION

Who might feel left out of my usual circle, and what could I do to help them belong?

DEC. 2 MICAH 5:1–5a

Small beginnings

1 Now you are walled around with a wall; siege is laid
against us; with a rod they strike the ruler of Israel upon
the cheek. 2 But you, O Bethlehem of Ephrathah, who are
one of the little clans of Judah, from you shall come forth
for me one who is to rule in Israel, whose origin is from
of old, from ancient days. 3 Therefore he shall give them
up until the time when she who is in labor has brought
forth; then the rest of his kindred shall return to the
people of Israel. 4 And he shall stand and feed his flock in
the strength of the LORD, in the majesty of the name of
the LORD his God. And they shall live secure, for now he
shall be great to the ends of the earth; 5 and he shall be the
one of peace.

REFLECTION

Bethlehem is small, easily overlooked among Judah's towns. Yet it is precisely there that Micah locates God's promised ruler, who will stand and shepherd the people and "shall be the one of peace." God's strength appears not as domination but as care. Advent asks us to look again at what seems too small to matter.

PRACTICE

Look for one small act of faithfulness you can offer today.

QUESTION

What small act of kindness or faithfulness has made a difference in my life?

DEC. 3 HOSEA 6:1–6

More than appearances

1 "Come, let us return to the LORD; for it is he who has
torn, and he will heal us; he has struck down, and he will
bind us up. 2 After two days he will revive us; on the third
day he will raise us up, that we may live before him. 3 Let
us know, let us press on to know the LORD; his appearing
is as sure as the dawn; he will come to us like the showers,
like the spring rains that water the earth." 4 What shall
I do with you, O Ephraim? What shall I do with you, O
Judah? Your love is like a morning cloud, like the dew
that goes away early. 5 Therefore I have hewn them by the
prophets, I have killed them by the words of my mouth,
and my judgment goes forth as the light. 6 For I desire
steadfast love and not sacrifice, the knowledge of God
rather than burnt offerings.

REFLECTION

Hosea calls the people to return to the Lord, even as he exposes devotion that disappears like morning mist. God desires steadfast love and knowledge of God, not worship separated from mercy. Hope cannot live on appearances alone. It takes root when our worship and our treatment of neighbors tell the same story.

PRACTICE

In one conversation today, listen carefully before trying to prove your point.

QUESTION

When have I followed a religious habit but missed an opportunity to show love?

DEC. 4 JEREMIAH 1:4–10

Called before ready

4 Now the word of the LORD came to me saying, 5 "Before
I formed you in the womb I knew you, and before you
were born I consecrated you; I appointed you a prophet to
the nations." 6 Then I said, "Ah, Lord GOD! Truly I do not
know how to speak, for I am only a boy." 7 But the LORD
said to me, "Do not say, 'I am only a boy'; for you shall go
to all to whom I send you, and you shall speak whatever I
command you. 8 Do not be afraid of them, for I am with
you to deliver you, says the LORD." 9 Then the LORD put
out his hand and touched my mouth; and the LORD said
to me, "Now I have put my words in your mouth. 10 See,
today I appoint you over nations and over kingdoms, to
pluck up and to pull down, to destroy and to overthrow,
to build and to plant."

REFLECTION

Jeremiah responds to God's call with a familiar objection: "I do not know how to speak." God does not ask him to pretend to be ready. Instead, God promises, "I am with you." Sometimes hope comes not as a change in our circumstances but as courage to answer a calling we cannot fulfill alone.

PRACTICE

Take one small step toward a responsibility or act of kindness you have been putting off.

QUESTION

What makes it hard for me to say yes when I sense God calling me to help?

DEC. 5 EZEKIEL 36:24–28

A new heart

Ezekiel 36:24–28 (NRSV)
24 I will take you from the nations, and gather you from all
the countries, and bring you into your own land.
25 I will sprinkle clean water upon you, and you shall be
clean from all your uncleannesses, and from all your idols
I will cleanse you. 26 A new heart I will give you, and a
new spirit I will put within you; and I will remove from
your body the heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh.
27 I will put my spirit within you, and make you follow my
statutes and be careful to observe my ordinances. 28 Then
you shall live in the land that I gave to your ancestors; and
you shall be my people, and I will be your God.

REFLECTION

God promises to give the exiles a new heart and a new spirit. The promise is more than an instruction to try harder, for the God who calls people to faithfulness also gives them what they need to respond. Advent hope rests not finally in our ability to remake ourselves, but in God's power to renew us.

PRACTICE

Pray slowly: "Give me a heart that can listen."

QUESTION

What part of my life needs God's help to change, beyond simply trying harder?

FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH OF SHREVEPORT

WEEK TWO · PEACE



Prepare: Make a Way | DECEMBER 6 – 12

"Prepare the way of the Lord, make his paths straight." MARK 1:3

HYMN	*"Comfort, Comfort Now My People"*
PRAYER	Pray for reconciliation and courage to turn toward God.
ACTION	This week, take one thoughtful step toward peace: acknowledge a mistake, listen without defensiveness, offer an apology, or pray for wisdom in a strained relationship. Seeking peace never requires accepting mistreatment or compromising safety.

DEC. 6 **MARK 1:1–8**

Beginning in the wilderness

1 The beginning of the good news of Jesus Christ, the Son
of God. 2 As it is written in the prophet Isaiah, "See, I am
sending my messenger ahead of you, who will prepare
your way; 3 the voice of one crying out in the wilderness:
'Prepare the way of the Lord, make his paths straight,' "
4 John the baptizer appeared in the wilderness, proclaiming
a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins.
5 And people from the whole Judean countryside and all
the people of Jerusalem were going out to him, and were
baptized by him in the river Jordan, confessing their sins.
6 Now John was clothed with camel's hair, with a leather
belt around his waist, and he ate locusts and wild honey.
7 He proclaimed, "The one who is more powerful than I
is coming after me; I am not worthy to stoop down and
untie the thong of his sandals. 8 I have baptized you with
water; but he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit."

REFLECTION

Mark's Gospel opens in the wilderness, not in a palace. John announces a baptism of repentance and directs attention beyond himself to the One who is coming. John's message reminds us that peace begins with truth: we cannot prepare the Lord's way while insisting that nothing in us needs to change. Repentance, then, is not the opposite of good news but one way we make room to receive it.

PRACTICE

Spend a few quiet minutes asking God to show you one attitude or habit that needs to change.

QUESTION

What habit or attitude makes it harder for me to welcome God's peace?

DEC. 7 **ISAIAH 26:7–15**

The path of peace

7 The way of the righteous is level; O Just One, you make
smooth the path of the righteous. 8 In the path of your
judgments, O LORD, we wait for you; your name and
your renown are the soul's desire. 9 My soul yearns for you
in the night, my spirit within me earnestly seeks you. For
when your judgments are in the earth, the inhabitants
of the world learn righteousness. 10 If favor is shown to
the wicked, they do not learn righteousness; in the land
of uprightness they deal perversely and do not see the
majesty of the LORD. 11 O LORD, your hand is lifted up,
but they do not see it. Let them see your zeal for your
people, and be ashamed. Let the fire for your adversaries
consume them. 12 O LORD, you will ordain peace for us,
for indeed, all that we have done, you have done for us.
13 O LORD our God, other lords besides you have ruled
over us, but we acknowledge your name

DEC. 7 ISAIAH 26:7–15

alone. 14 The dead do not live; shades do not rise— because you have punished and destroyed them, and wiped out all memory of them. 15 But you have increased the nation, O LORD, you have increased the nation; you are glorified; you have enlarged all the borders of the land.

REFLECTION

Isaiah longs for God's name to be honored and admits how slowly people learn righteousness. Rather than claiming that God's people already possess peace, the prayer acknowledges how much they still need to learn. For Isaiah, peace is more than the absence of conflict; it grows as people learn to practice justice in God's presence.

PRACTICE

Pray for wisdom for those who exercise authority.

QUESTION

How would my choices change if I cared as much about fairness for others as about comfort for myself?

DEC. 8 ISAIAH 4:2–6

Shelter for the vulnerable

2 On that day the branch of the LORD shall be beautiful and glorious, and the fruit of the land shall be the pride and glory of the survivors of Israel. 3 Whoever is left in Zion and remains in Jerusalem will be called holy, everyone who has been recorded for life in Jerusalem, 4 once the Lord has washed away the filth of the daughters of Zion and cleansed the bloodstains of Jerusalem from its midst by a spirit of judgment and by a spirit of burning. 5 Then the LORD will create over the whole site of Mount Zion and over its places of assembly a cloud by day and smoke and the shining of a flaming fire by night. Indeed over all the glory there will be a canopy. 6 It will serve as a pavilion, a shade by day from the heat, and a refuge and a shelter from the storm and rain.

REFLECTION

Isaiah pictures a community made clean and sheltered beneath the presence of God. Shade by day and refuge in the storm are not ornaments in this vision; they are signs of protection. This vision invites us to think beyond our own sense of safety and ask who remains exposed—and how we might share in God's sheltering care.

PRACTICE

Pray for those without secure housing. Consider supporting a trusted local ministry through a needed donation, volunteer time, or advocacy.

QUESTION

What helps me feel safe, and how could I help someone else feel welcomed or protected?

DEC. 9 LUKE 1:5–17

A promise in the silence

5 In the days of King Herod of Judea, there was a priest named Zechariah, who belonged to the priestly order of Abijah. His wife was a descendant of Aaron, and her name was Elizabeth. 6 Both of them were righteous before God, living blamelessly according to all the commandments and regulations of the Lord. 7 But they had no children, because Elizabeth was barren, and both were getting on in years. 8 Once when he was serving as priest before God and his section was on duty, 9 he was chosen by lot, according to the custom of the priesthood, to enter the sanctuary of the Lord and offer incense. 10 Now at the time of the incense offering, the whole assembly of the people was praying outside. 11 Then there appeared to him an angel of the Lord, standing at the right side of the altar of incense. 12 When Zechariah saw him, he was terrified; and fear overwhelmed him.

DEC. 9

LUKE 1:5–17

13 But the angel said to him, “Do not be afraid, Zechariah,
for your prayer has been heard. Your wife Elizabeth will
bear you a son, and you will name him John. 14 You will
have joy and gladness, and many will rejoice at his birth,
15 for he will be great in the sight of the Lord. He must
never drink wine or strong drink; even before his birth
he will be filled with the Holy Spirit. 16 He will turn
many of the people of Israel to the Lord their God. 17
With the spirit and power of Elijah he will go before him,
to turn the hearts of parents to their children, and the
disobedient to the wisdom of the righteous, to make ready
a people prepared for the Lord.”

REFLECTION

Zechariah and Elizabeth have lived with disappointment for many years. Then an angel announces a son who will prepare people for the Lord by turning hearts toward one another. Although the promise cannot erase their years of waiting, it opens a future they could scarcely have imagined. The angel’s message also reminds us that peace may begin with hearts turning toward one another, even before circumstances change.

PRACTICE

Pray for someone carrying a long-unanswered longing.

QUESTION

When an answer takes longer than I hoped, what helps me keep trusting God?

DEC. 10

HABAKKUK 2:1–5

Wait for the vision

1 I will stand at my watchpost, and station myself on the
rampart; I will keep watch to see what he will say to me,
and what he will answer concerning my complaint. 2 Then
the LORD answered me and said: Write the vision; make
it plain on tablets, so that a runner may read it. 3 For
there is still a vision for the appointed time; it speaks of
the end, and does not lie. If it seems to tarry, wait for it;
it will surely come, it will not delay. 4 Look at the proud!
Their spirit is not right in them, but the righteous live by
their faith. 5 Moreover, wealth is treacherous; the arrogant
do not endure. They open their throats wide as Sheol; like
Death they never have enough. They gather all nations for
themselves, and collect all peoples as their own.

REFLECTION

Habakkuk takes his place at the watchpost, waiting for an answer to his complaint. The vision may seem slow, but the prophet is told to wait faithfully. For Habakkuk, waiting is not the same as doing nothing. It is the discipline of holding fast to both trust and responsibility. Peace is possible even before every question has an answer.

PRACTICE

Sit in silence for three minutes without trying to solve anything.

QUESTION

What do I want to happen quickly, and how might I live faithfully while I wait?

DEC. 11

HABAKKUK 3:2–6

Remember what God has done

2 O LORD, I have heard of your renown, and I stand in
awe, O LORD, of your work. In our own time revive
it; in our own time make it known; in wrath may you
remember mercy. 3 God came from Teman, the Holy One
from Mount Paran. Selah His glory covered the heavens,
and the earth was full of his praise. 4 The brightness was
like the sun; rays came forth from his hand, where his
power lay hidden. 5 Before him went pestilence, and
plague followed close behind. 6 He stopped and shook
the earth; he looked and made the nations tremble. The
eternal mountains were shattered; along his ancient
pathways the everlasting hills sank low.

DEC. 11 HABAKKUK 3:2–6

Remember what God has done

REFLECTION

Habakkuk remembers God's mighty acts while pleading, "in wrath may you remember mercy." Rather than covering his fear with easy confidence, he brings it into the presence of the God whose faithfulness he remembers. Advent peace is not forgetfulness about what troubles us; it is learning where to carry our trouble.

PRACTICE

Recall and give thanks for one past provision of God.

QUESTION

When have I received help, encouragement, or strength at just the right time?

DEC. 12 MATTHEW 21:28–32

The answer that changes

28 "What do you think? A man had two sons; he went
to the first and said, 'Son, go and work in the vineyard
today.' 29 He answered, 'I will not'; but later he changed his
mind and went. 30 The father went to the second and said
the same; and he answered, 'I go, sir'; but he did not go.
31 Which of the two did the will of his father?" They said,
"The first." Jesus said to them, "Truly I tell you, the tax
collectors and the prostitutes are going into the kingdom
of God ahead of you. 32 For John came to you in the way
of righteousness and you did not believe him, but the tax
collectors and the prostitutes believed him; and even after
you saw it, you did not change your minds and believe
him.

REFLECTION

One son says no but later goes to work. The other says yes and never goes. Jesus asks which one did the father's will. The answer is plain, though uncomfortable: faithfulness is not measured by how readily we say the right things. Repentance becomes real when our lives begin to change.

PRACTICE

Choose one manageable act of kindness or responsibility you have meant to do, and take the first step.

QUESTION

Is there a promise I have made that I need to follow through on? What is one realistic next step?

FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH OF SHREVEPORT

WEEK THREE · JOY



Rejoice: Witness to the Light | DECEMBER 13 – 19

"He came as a witness to testify to the light." JOHN 1:7

HYMN *"People, Look East"*

PRAYER Give thanks for signs of God's restoration, even amid grief.

ACTION Practice attentive gratitude this week. Each day, notice a particular act of goodness or faithfulness and express your appreciation directly, in writing, or in prayer.

DEC. 13 **JOHN 1:6–8, 19–28**

Not the light, but a witness

6 There was a man sent from God, whose name was John.
7 He came as a witness to testify to the light, so that all
might believe through him. 8 He himself was not the light,
but he came to testify to the light.

19 This is the testimony given by John when the Jews sent
priests and Levites from Jerusalem to ask him, "Who are
you?" 20 He confessed and did not deny it, but confessed,
"I am not the Messiah." 21 And they asked him, "What
then? Are you Elijah?" He said, "I am not." "Are you the
prophet?" He answered, "No." 22 Then they said to him,
"Who are you? Let us have an answer for those who sent
us. What do you say about yourself?" 23 He said, "I am the
voice of one crying out in the wilderness, 'Make straight
the way of the Lord,' " as the prophet Isaiah said. 24 Now
they had been sent from the Pharisees.
25 They asked him, "Why then are you baptizing if you
are neither the Messiah, nor Elijah, nor the prophet?" 26
John answered them, "I baptize with water. Among you
stands one whom you do not know, 27 the one who is
coming after me; I am not worthy to untie the thong of
his sandal." 28 This took place in Bethany across the Jordan
where John was baptizing.

REFLECTION

John is not the light. The Gospel makes that clear before telling us what John does: he bears witness to the light. John's example offers freedom in knowing both who we are and who we are not. We do not have to save the world or make ourselves its center. We are called to point toward the One who gives it life. That is a quiet source of joy.

PRACTICE

Tell someone one specific good quality or kindness you have noticed in them.

QUESTION

How can my words or actions help someone notice God's love rather than seek praise for myself?



DEC. 14 PSALM 125

Held fast

A Song of Ascents. 1 Those who trust in the LORD are
like Mount Zion, which cannot be moved, but abides
forever. 2 As the mountains surround Jerusalem, so the
LORD surrounds his people, from this time on and
forevermore. 3 For the scepter of wickedness shall not rest
on the land allotted to the righteous, so that the righteous
might not stretch out their hands to do wrong. 4 Do good,
O LORD, to those who are good, and to those who are
upright in their hearts. 5 But those who turn aside to
their own crooked ways the LORD will lead away with
evildoers. Peace be upon Israel!

REFLECTION

The psalm compares those who trust the Lord to Mount Zion, which abides. Just as mountains surround Jerusalem, the psalm declares that God surrounds the people. Joy does not require us to pretend that nothing can shake us. It grows when we discover that our lives are held by more than our circumstances.

PRACTICE

Pray for a person whose world feels unstable.

QUESTION

What helps me feel steady when plans change or life feels uncertain?

DEC. 15 2 KINGS 2:9–22

A gift to pass on

9 When they had crossed, Elijah said to Elisha, “Tell me
what I may do for you, before I am taken from you.” Elisha
said, “Please let me inherit a double share of your spirit.”
10 He responded, “You have asked a hard thing; yet, if you
see me as I am being taken from you, it will be granted
you; if not, it will not.” 11 As they continued walking and
talking, a chariot of fire and horses of fire separated the
two of them, and Elijah ascended in a whirlwind into
heaven. 12 Elisha kept watching and crying out, “Father,
father! The chariots of Israel and its horsemen!” But when
he could no longer see him, he grasped his own clothes
and tore them in two pieces.
13 He picked up the mantle of Elijah that had fallen from
him, and went back and stood on the bank of the Jordan.
14 He took the mantle of Elijah that had fallen from him,
and struck the water, saying, “Where is the LORD, the
God of Elijah?” When he had struck the water, the water
was parted to the one side and to the other, and Elisha
went over. 15 When the company of prophets who were at
Jericho saw him at a distance, they declared, “The spirit of
Elijah rests on Elisha.” They came to meet him and bowed
to the ground before him. 16 They said to him, “See now,
we have fifty strong men among your servants; please let
them go and seek your master; it may be that the spirit of
the LORD has caught him up and thrown him down on
some mountain or into some valley.” He responded, “No,
do not send them.” 17 But when they urged him until he
was ashamed, he said, “Send them.” So they sent fifty men
who searched for three days but did not find him. 18 When
they came back to him (he had remained at Jericho), he
said to them, “Did I not say to you, Do not go?” 19 Now the
people of the city said to Elisha, “The location of this city
is good, as my lord sees; but the water is bad, and the land
is unfruitful.” 2
0 He said, “Bring me a new bowl, and put salt in it.” So
they brought it to him. 21 Then he went to the spring of
water and threw the salt into it, and said, “Thus says the
LORD, I have made this water wholesome; from now on
neither death nor miscarriage shall come from it.” 22 So the
water has been wholesome to this day, according to the
word that Elisha spoke.

DEC. 15 2 KINGS 2:9–22

A gift to pass on

REFLECTION

Elisha asks Elijah for a double share of his spirit, the language of an heir receiving responsibility. Rather than asking for a memento of the past, Elisha seeks what he will need to serve in the future opening before him. Joy includes gratitude for those who prepared the way—and courage to carry their faithfulness forward.

PRACTICE

Thank someone who has nurtured your faith.

QUESTION

Who has helped me grow in faith or kindness, and what could I share with someone else?

DEC. 16 MALACHI 3:16–4:6

Remembered by God

16 Then those who revered the LORD spoke with one
another. The LORD took note and listened, and a book
of remembrance was written before him of those who
revered the LORD and thought on his name. 17 They shall
be mine, says the LORD of hosts, my special possession on
the day when I act, and I will spare them as parents spare
their children who serve them. 18 Then once more you shall
see the difference between the righteous and the wicked,
between one who serves God and one who does not serve
him. 1 See, the day is coming, burning like an oven, when
all the arrogant and all evildoers will be stubble; the day
that comes shall burn them up, says the LORD of hosts,
so that it will leave them neither root nor branch. 2 But
for you who revere my name the sun of righteousness shall
rise, with healing in its wings. You shall go out leaping
like calves from the stall. 3 And you shall tread down the
wicked, for they will be ashes under the soles of your
feet, on the day when I act, says the LORD of hosts. 4
Remember the teaching of my servant Moses, the statutes
and ordinances that I commanded him at Horeb for all
Israel. 5 Lo, I will send you the prophet Elijah before the
great and terrible day of the LORD comes. 6 He will turn
the hearts of parents to their children and the hearts of
children to their parents, so that I will not come and
strike the land with a curse.

REFLECTION

Malachi speaks to people tempted to believe that serving God makes no difference. The prophet answers with a promise that God remembers those who revere the Lord. Because the promised day also brings judgment, this joy cannot simply ignore injustice. It trusts that hidden faithfulness matters and that evil will not have the final word.

PRACTICE

Notice and affirm an act of quiet faithfulness.

QUESTION

What quiet act of service deserves my thanks, even if few people notice it?

DEC. 17 2 SAMUEL 6:1–11

Holy presence

1 David again gathered all the chosen men of Israel, thirty
thousand. 2 David and all the people with him set out and
went from Baale-judah, to bring up from there the ark of
God, which is called by the name of the LORD of hosts
who is enthroned on the cherubim. 3 They carried the ark
of God on a new cart, and brought it out of the house of
Abinadab, which was on the hill. Uzzah and Ahio, the
sons of Abinadab, were driving the new cart 4 with the
ark of God; and Ahio went in front of the ark. 5 David
and all the house of Israel were dancing before the LORD
with all their might, with songs and lyres and harps and
tambourines and castanets and

DEC. 17

2 SAMUEL 6:1–11

cymbals. 6 When they came to the threshing floor of
Nacon, Uzzah reached out his hand to the ark of God
and took hold of it, for the oxen shook it. 7 The anger of
the LORD was kindled against Uzzah; and God struck
him there because he reached out his hand to the ark; and
he died there beside the ark of God. 8 David was angry
because the LORD had burst forth with an outburst upon
Uzzah; so that place is called Perez-uzzah, to this day. 9
David was afraid of the LORD that day; he said, "How
can the ark of the LORD come into my care?" 10 So David
was unwilling to take the ark of the LORD into his care
in the city of David; instead David took it to the house of
Obed-edom the Gittite. 11 The ark of the LORD remained
in the house of Obed-edom the Gittite three months; and
the LORD blessed Obed-edom and all his household.

REFLECTION

The story of Uzzah's death is disturbing, and the text does not make it easy. David himself responds with anger and fear. The ark signifies God's holy presence, which cannot be possessed or managed for human purposes. This difficult story reminds us that Advent joy is not shallow cheerfulness. It includes reverence before a God whose presence is gift, not property.

PRACTICE

Enter a moment of prayer with quiet reverence.

QUESTION

When do I ask God only for what I want, rather than making room to listen?

DEC. 18

2 SAMUEL 6:12–19

Joy shared freely

12 It was told King David, "The LORD has blessed the
household of Obed-edom and all that belongs to him,
because of the ark of God." So David went and brought
up the ark of God from the house of Obed-edom to the
city of David with rejoicing; 13 and when those who bore
the ark of the LORD had gone six paces, he sacrificed an
ox and a fatling. 14 David danced before the LORD with
all his might; David was girded with a linen ephod. 15 So
David and all the house of Israel brought up the ark of the
LORD with shouting, and with the sound of the trumpet.
16 As the ark of the LORD came into the city of David,
Michal daughter of Saul looked out of the window, and
saw King David leaping and dancing before the LORD;
and she despised him in her heart.
17 They brought in the ark of the LORD, and set it in its
place, inside the tent that David had pitched for it; and
David offered burnt offerings and offerings of well-being
before the LORD. 18 When David had finished offering
the burnt offerings and the offerings of well-being, he
blessed the people in the name of the LORD of hosts,
19 and distributed food among all the people, the whole
multitude of Israel, both men and women, to each a cake
of bread, a portion of meat, and a cake of raisins. Then all
the people went back to their homes.

REFLECTION

David dances before the Lord as the ark enters Jerusalem. The celebration then moves outward as food is shared with the gathered people. Worship does not remain a private experience of delight. Joy that has truly received a gift looks for someone with whom to share it.

PRACTICE

Offer a simple gesture of hospitality today—an invitation, a welcoming conversation, or an encouraging message.

QUESTION

Who might appreciate being invited, included, or remembered this season?

DEC. 19 JUDGES 13:2–24

Unexpected beginnings

2 There was a certain man of Zorah, of the tribe of the
Danites, whose name was Manoah. His wife was barren,
having borne no children. 3 And the angel of the LORD
appeared to the woman and said to her, "Although you
are barren, having borne no children, you shall conceive
and bear a son. 4 Now be careful not to drink wine or
strong drink, or to eat anything unclean, 5 for you shall
conceive and bear a son. No razor is to come on his
head, for the boy shall be a nazirite to God from birth.
It is he who shall begin to deliver Israel from the hand
of the Philistines." 6 Then the woman came and told her
husband, "A man of God came to me, and his appearance
was like that of an angel of God, most awe-inspiring; I
did not ask him where he came from, and he did not tell
me his name; 7 but he said to me, 'You shall conceive and
bear a son. So then drink no wine or strong drink, and
eat nothing unclean, for the boy shall be a nazirite to
God from birth to the day of his death.' " 8 Then Manoah
entreated the LORD, and said, "O LORD, I pray, let the
man of God whom you sent come to us again and teach
us what we are to do concerning the boy who will be
born." 9 God listened to Manoah, and the angel of God
came again to the woman as she sat in the field; but her
husband Manoah was not with her. 10 So the woman ran
quickly and told her husband, "The man who came to me
the other day has appeared to me." 11 Manoah got up and
followed his wife, and came to the man and said to him,
"Are you the man who spoke to this woman?" And he
said, "I am." 12 Then Manoah said, "Now when your words
come true, what is to be the boy's rule of life; what is he
to do?" 13 The angel of the LORD said to Manoah, "Let the
woman give heed to all that I said to her. 14 She may not
eat of anything that comes from the vine. She is not to
drink wine or strong drink, or eat any unclean thing. She
is to observe everything that I commanded her." 15 Manoah
said to the angel of the LORD, "Allow us to detain you,
and prepare a kid for you." 16 The angel of the LORD said
to Manoah, "If you detain me, I will not eat your food;
but if you want to prepare a burnt offering, then offer it
to the LORD." (For Manoah did not know that he was
the angel of the LORD.) 17 Then Manoah said to the angel
of the LORD, "What is your name, so that we may honor
you when your words come true?" 18 But the angel of the
LORD said to him, "Why do you ask my name? It is too
wonderful." 19 So Manoah took the kid with the grain
offering, and offered it on the rock to the LORD, to him
who works wonders. 20 When the flame went up toward
heaven from the altar, the angel of the LORD ascended in
the flame of the altar while Manoah and his wife looked
on; and they fell on their faces to the ground.
21 The angel of the LORD did not appear again to Manoah
and his wife. Then Manoah realized that it was the angel
of the LORD. 22 And Manoah said to his wife, "We shall
surely die, for we have seen God." 23 But his wife said to
him, "If the LORD had meant to kill us, he would not
have accepted a burnt offering and a grain offering at our
hands, or shown us all these things, or now announced
to us such things as these." 24 The woman bore a son, and
named him Samson. The boy grew, and the LORD blessed
him.

REFLECTION

The angel's announcement to Samson's mother begins with a painful reality: she has not been able to bear a child. The promised son will be set apart for a particular calling, requiring a faithful response from his parents. This does not guarantee that every longing will be fulfilled in the same way. It reminds us that God's work may begin before we can see its shape.

PRACTICE

Give attention to a person or possibility easily dismissed.

QUESTION

What person or small beginning have I overlooked because it did not seem important?

FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH OF SHREVEPORT

WEEK FOUR · LOVE



Receive: Make Room for God | DECEMBER 20 – 25

"Let it be with me according to your word." LUKE 1:38

HYMN	*"The Angel Gabriel from Heaven Came"*
PRAYER	Pray for trust, hospitality, and love expressed through action.
ACTION	Each day, consider who might benefit from your attention or care. Respond in a way suited to your circumstances—through a conversation, practical assistance, hospitality, encouragement, or prayer.

DEC. 20 **LUKE 1:26–38**

Let it be with me

26 In the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent by God
to a town in Galilee called Nazareth, 27 to a virgin engaged
to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David.
The virgin's name was Mary. 28 And he came to her and
said, "Greetings, favored one! The Lord is with you." 29 But
she was much perplexed by his words and pondered what
sort of greeting this might be. 30 The angel said to her, "Do
not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God.
31 And now, you will conceive in your womb and bear a
son, and you will name him Jesus. 32 He will be great, and
will be called the Son of the Most High, and the Lord
God will give to him the throne of his ancestor David. 33
He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of his
kingdom there will be no end." 34 Mary said to the angel,
"How can this be, since I am a virgin?" 35 The angel said to
her, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power
of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore the child
to be born will be holy; he will be called Son of God. 36
And now, your relative Elizabeth in her old age has also
conceived a son; and this is the sixth month for her who
was said to be barren. 37 For nothing will be impossible
with God." 38 Then Mary said, "Here am I, the servant of
the Lord; let it be with me according to your word." Then
the angel departed from her.

REFLECTION

Mary asks a reasonable question: "How can this be?" Although the angel gives her no map of everything that lies ahead, Mary answers, "Let it be with me according to your word." Her faith is not certainty about the future; it is trust in the God who calls her. Love makes room for God even when the way ahead remains unknown.

PRACTICE

Pray Mary's response slowly in your own words.

QUESTION

What might it mean for me to say yes to God in one ordinary choice today?

DEC. 21 **1 SAMUEL 1:1–18**

A prayer without pretense

1 There was a certain man of Ramathaim, a Zuphite from
the hill country of Ephraim, whose name was Elkanah
son of Jeroham son of Elihu son of Tohu son of Zuph, an
Ephraimite. 2 He had two wives; the name of the one was
Hannah, and the name of the other Peninnah. Peninnah
had children, but Hannah had no children. 3 Now this
man used to go up year by year from his town to worship
and to sacrifice to the LORD of hosts at Shiloh, where the
two sons of Eli, Hophni and Phinehas, were priests of the
LORD. 4 On the day when Elkanah sacrificed, he would
give portions to his wife Peninnah and to all her sons and
daughters; 5 but to Hannah he gave a double

portion, because he loved her, though the LORD had closed her womb. 6 Her rival used to provoke her severely, to irritate her, because the LORD had closed her womb. 7 So it went on year by year; as often as she went up to the house of the LORD, she used to provoke her. Therefore Hannah wept and would not eat. 8 Her husband Elkanah said to her, "Hannah, why do you weep? Why do you not eat? Why is your heart sad? Am I not more to you than ten sons?" 9 After they had eaten and drunk at Shiloh, Hannah rose and presented herself before the LORD. Now Eli the priest was sitting on the seat beside the doorpost of the temple of the LORD. 10 She was deeply distressed and prayed to the LORD, and wept bitterly. 11 She made this vow: "O LORD of hosts, if only you will look on the misery of your servant, and remember me, and not forget your servant, but will give to your servant a male child, then I will set him before you as a nazirite until the day of his death. He shall drink neither wine nor intoxicants, and no razor shall touch his head." 12 As she continued praying before the LORD, Eli observed her mouth. 13 Hannah was praying silently; only her lips moved, but her voice was not heard; therefore Eli thought she was drunk. 14 So Eli said to her, "How long will you make a drunken spectacle of yourself? Put away your wine." 15 But Hannah answered, "No, my lord, I am a woman deeply troubled; I have drunk neither wine nor strong drink, but I have been pouring out my soul before the LORD. 16 Do not regard your servant as a worthless woman, for I have been speaking out of my great anxiety and vexation all this time." 17 Then Eli answered, "Go in peace; the God of Israel grant the petition you have made to him." 18 And she said, "Let your servant find favor in your sight." Then the woman went to her quarters, ate and drank with her husband, and her countenance was sad no longer.

REFLECTION

Hannah enters the sanctuary carrying anguish that others cannot resolve. She pours out her soul before the Lord, even when Eli misunderstands her prayer. Hannah's example reminds us that love does not require polished words or a composed face. Sometimes its first gift is freedom to speak truthfully before God; at other times, it is the willingness to listen as another person does so.

PRACTICE

Listen with care to someone who wants to talk. You do not have to solve their problem.

QUESTION

What sadness or worry have I been hesitant to tell God about?

A gift returned

19 They rose early in the morning and worshiped before the LORD; then they went back to their house at Ramah. Elkanah knew his wife Hannah, and the LORD remembered her. 20 In due time Hannah conceived and bore a son. She named him Samuel, for she said, "I have asked him of the LORD." 21 The man Elkanah and all his household went up to offer to the LORD the yearly sacrifice, and to pay his vow. 22 But Hannah did not go up, for she said to her husband, "As soon as the child is weaned, I will bring him, that he may appear in the presence of the LORD, and remain there forever; I will offer him as a nazirite for all time." 23 Her husband Elkanah said to her, "Do what seems best to you, wait until you have weaned him; only—may the LORD establish his word." So the woman remained and nursed her son, until she weaned him. 24 When she had weaned him, she took him up with her, along with a three-year-old bull, an ephah of flour, and a skin of wine. She brought him to the house of the LORD at Shiloh; and the child was young. 25 Then they slaughtered the bull, and they brought the child to Eli. 26 And she said, "Oh, my lord! As you live, my lord, I am the woman who was standing here in your presence, praying to the LORD. 27 For this child I prayed; and the LORD has granted me the petition that I made to him. 28 Therefore I have lent him to the LORD; as long as he lives, he is given to the LORD." She left him there for the LORD.

DEC. 22 1 SAMUEL 1:19–28

A gift returned

REFLECTION

Hannah returns with Samuel, the child for whom she prayed, and dedicates him to the Lord. It is a tender and costly scene, reminding us that thanksgiving does not mean holding a gift tightly. It means recognizing that a beloved life has a calling beyond our possession. Love receives gratefully and learns, little by little, to let generosity follow gratitude.

PRACTICE

Thank God for someone who has cared for you, and show that person appreciation if you can.

QUESTION

How might remembering what I have received make me more generous with others?

DEC. 23 1 SAMUEL 2:1–10

Love turns the world

1 Hannah prayed and said, "My heart exults in the LORD;
my strength is exalted in my God. My mouth derides my
enemies, because I rejoice in my victory.
2 "There is no Holy One like the LORD, no one besides
you; there is no Rock like our God. 3 Talk no more so very
proudly, let not arrogance come from your mouth; for
the LORD is a God of knowledge, and by him actions are
weighed. 4 The bows of the mighty are broken, but the
feeble gird on strength. 5 Those who were full have hired
themselves out for bread, but those who were hungry
are fat with spoil. The barren has borne seven, but she
who has many children is forlorn. 6 The LORD kills and
brings to life; he brings down to Sheol and raises up. 7 The
LORD makes poor and makes rich; he brings low, he also
exalts. 8 He raises up the poor from the dust; he lifts the
needy from the ash heap, to make them sit with princes
and inherit a seat of honor. For the pillars of the earth are
the LORD's, and on them he has set the world. 9 "He will
guard the feet of his faithful ones, but the wicked shall be
cut off in darkness; for not by might does one prevail. 10
The LORD! His adversaries shall be shattered; the Most
High will thunder in heaven. The LORD will judge the
ends of the earth; he will give strength to his king, and
exalt the power of his anointed."

REFLECTION

Hannah's song celebrates a God who lifts the poor, feeds the hungry, and overturns human assumptions about strength. Centuries later, Mary will sing a remarkably similar song. The echo matters because it places the birth of Jesus within God's long work of setting things right. Divine love, therefore, is more than a warm feeling: It takes the side of life and justice.

PRACTICE

Make space for someone else's perspective today, especially someone who is often interrupted or overlooked.

QUESTION

Whose experiences do I tend to overlook, and what might I learn by listening?



DEC. 24 LUKE 2:1–14

Good news in ordinary places

1 In those days a decree went out from Emperor Augustus
that all the world should be registered. 2 This was the first
registration and was taken while Quirinius was governor
of Syria. 3 All went to their own towns to be registered. 4
Joseph also went from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to
Judea, to the city of David called Bethlehem, because he
was descended from the house and family of David. 5 He
went to be registered with Mary, to whom he was engaged
and who was expecting a child. 6 While they were there,
the time came for her to deliver her child. 7 And she gave
birth to her firstborn son and wrapped him in bands of
cloth, and laid him in a manger, because there was no
place for them in the inn. 8 In that region there were
shepherds living in the fields, keeping watch over their
flock by night. 9 Then an angel of the Lord stood before
them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and
they were terrified. 10 But the angel said to them, "Do not
be afraid; for see—I am bringing you good news of great
joy for all the people:
11 to you is born this day in the city of David a Savior,
who is the Messiah, the Lord. 12 This will be a sign for you:
you will find a child wrapped in bands of cloth and lying
in a manger." 13 And suddenly there was with the angel a
multitude of the heavenly host, praising God and saying,
14 "Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace
among those whom he favors!"

REFLECTION

Caesar issues a decree, and families travel because the empire has spoken. Yet the news that changes the world comes not to Caesar but to shepherds keeping watch at night, while the child himself lies in a manger. God comes not wrapped in the trappings of power but in the vulnerability of human life. Love has come close enough to be held.

PRACTICE

Pray for people without safe housing. Consider a simple act of welcome or support you can offer.

QUESTION

Where might God be at work in a person or place I usually pass by?

DEC. 25 LUKE 2:8–20

Go and see

8 In that region there were shepherds living in the fields,
keeping watch over their flock by night. 9 Then an angel
of the Lord stood before them, and the glory of the
Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. 10 But
the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid; for see—I am
bringing you good news of great joy for all the people: 11
to you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who
is the Messiah, the Lord. 12 This will be a sign for you: you
will find a child wrapped in bands of cloth and lying in
a manger." 13 And suddenly there was with the angel a
multitude of the heavenly host, praising God and saying,
14 "Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace
among those whom he favors!" 15 When the angels had
left them and gone into heaven, the shepherds said to one
another, "Let us go now to Bethlehem and see this thing
that has taken place, which the Lord has made known
to us." 16 So they went with haste and found Mary and
Joseph, and the child lying in the manger.
17 When they saw this, they made known what had been
told them about this child; 18 and all who heard it were
amazed at what the shepherds told them. 19 But Mary
treasured all these words and pondered them in her heart.
20 The shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for
all they had heard and seen, as it had been told them.



DEC. 25 LUKE 2:8–20

Go and see

REFLECTION

The shepherds do four things: they hear, they go, they see, and they tell. Mary, meanwhile, treasures and ponders what has happened. Together, their responses remind us that Christmas makes room for both quiet wonder and joyful witness. The season ends, but the calling does not. Having received God's love in Christ, we carry that love into the world.

PRACTICE

Show Christlike love in one concrete way today: help, include, thank, forgive, or encourage someone.

QUESTION

What good news about God's love have I experienced or witnessed that I could share?



ADVENT 2026

HOPE ✶ PEACE ✶ JOY ✶ LOVE

the LIGHT SHINES *in the* DARKNESS

And the darkness
did not overcome it.

JOHN 1:5



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