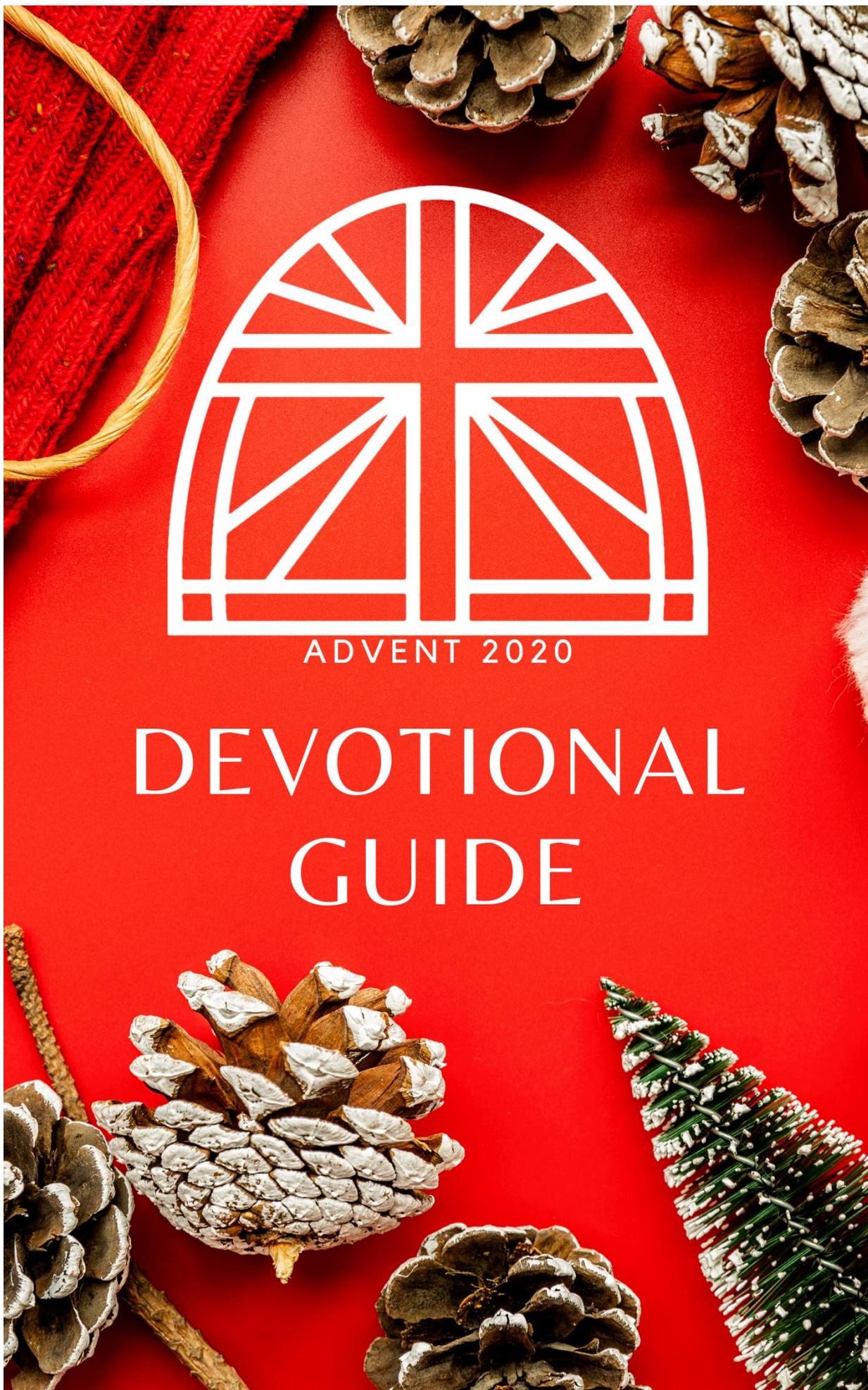




ADVENT 2020

DEVOTIONAL GUIDE



ABOUT THIS GUIDE

The season of Advent, which comes from the Latin word *adventus* meaning "coming" or "visit," begins four Sundays before Christmas and ends on Christmas Eve. Advent is the beginning of the church year for Christians.

During Advent, we prepare for and anticipate the coming of Christ. We remember the longing of Jews for a Messiah and our own longing for and need of forgiveness, salvation, and a new beginning. Even as we look back and celebrate the birth of Jesus in a humble stable in Bethlehem, we also look forward, anticipating the second coming of Christ as the fulfillment of all that was promised by his first coming. This devotional guide invites us to take three steps that will help us be ready to welcome Jesus on Christmas, and every day.

The first step is to examine our hearts. On Sundays, we will ask questions that apply each week's sermon in our lives. On the other days, we will examine our lives using one of the historic questions that John Wesley would ask the early Methodists whenever they gathered. These questions help us identify anything that might be keeping us from embracing Jesus with our whole heart.

The second step is turning toward God's heart. This can come by reading the scriptures, or by asking what might be the next step God is asking us to take to grow in our faithfulness.

The third step is prayer. We cannot even choose Jesus unless God helps us, and so we pray that we will be open to God and that we will rely on God to help us on the way. The prayers in this guide are a mixture of historic prayers and prompts for your own spontaneous prayer to God.

Day by day, step by step, we take the journey to Bethlehem and Christmas together!

Sunday
November 29, 2020

Sermon Reflection Questions:

What is your favorite thing that you don't understand?

Are there two things that you want that seem to contradict each other?

What do you think is the most mysterious thing about God?

When something seems like a mystery to you, does that make you more interested in it or less?

The Next Step

What would you like God to hold together for you this week?

Prayer

Take a moment to offer your own prayer, asking God to help you this week, and hold together what you cannot.

Monday
November 30, 2020

Historic Wesleyan Question:

Am I consciously or unconsciously creating the impression that I am better than I really am? In other words, am I a hypocrite?

Scripture

Isaiah 64:1-9

64:1 O that you would tear open the heavens and come down, so that the mountains would quake at your presence--

64:2 as when fire kindles brushwood and the fire causes water to boil-- to make your name known to your adversaries, so that the nations might tremble at your presence!

64:3 When you did awesome deeds that we did not expect, you came down, the mountains quaked at your presence.

64:4 From ages past no one has heard, no ear has perceived, no eye has seen any God besides you, who works for those who wait for him.

64:5 You meet those who gladly do right, those who remember you in your ways. But you were angry, and we sinned; because you hid yourself we transgressed.

64:6 We have all become like one who is unclean, and all our righteous deeds are like a filthy cloth. We all fade like a leaf, and our iniquities, like the wind, take us away.

64:7 There is no one who calls on your name, or attempts to take hold of you; for you have hidden your face from us, and have delivered us into the hand of our iniquity.

64:8 Yet, O LORD, you are our Father; we are the clay, and you are our potter; we are all the work of your hand.

64:9 Do not be exceedingly angry, O LORD, and do not remember iniquity forever. Now consider, we are all your people.

Prayer

God of justice and peace, from the heavens you rain down mercy and kindness, that all on earth may stand in awe and wonder before your marvelous deeds. Raise our heads in expectation, that we may yearn for the coming day of the Lord and stand without blame before your Son, Jesus Christ, who lives and reigns for ever and ever. Amen.

Tuesday
December 1, 2020

Historic Wesleyan Question:

Am I honest in all my acts and words, or do I exaggerate?

Scripture

Psalm 80:1-7, 17-19

80:1 Give ear, O Shepherd of Israel, you who lead Joseph like a flock! You who are enthroned upon the cherubim, shine forth

80:2 before Ephraim and Benjamin and Manasseh. Stir up your might, and come to save us!

80:3 Restore us, O God; let your face shine, that we may be saved.

80:4 O LORD God of hosts, how long will you be angry with your people's prayers?

80:5 You have fed them with the bread of tears, and given them tears to drink in full measure.

80:6 You make us the scorn of our neighbors; our enemies laugh among themselves.

80:7 Restore us, O God of hosts; let your face shine, that we may be saved.

80:17 But let your hand be upon the one at your right hand, the one whom you made strong for yourself.

80:18 Then we will never turn back from you; give us life, and we will call on your name.

80:19 Restore us, O LORD God of hosts; let your face shine, that we may be saved.

Prayer

Take a moment to pray for the needs of our church and the world.

Wednesday
December 2, 2020

Historic Wesleyan Question:

Do I confidentially pass on to another what was told to me in confidence?

Scripture

1 Corinthians 1:3-9

1:3 Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

1:4 I give thanks to my God always for you because of the grace of God that has been given you in Christ Jesus,

1:5 for in every way you have been enriched in him, in speech and knowledge of every kind--

1:6 just as the testimony of Christ has been strengthened among you--

1:7 so that you are not lacking in any spiritual gift as you wait for the revealing of our Lord Jesus Christ.

1:8 He will also strengthen you to the end, so that you may be blameless on the day of our Lord Jesus Christ.

1:9 God is faithful; by him you were called into the fellowship of his Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.

Prayer

Give us ears to hear, O God,
and eyes to watch,
that we may know your presence in our midst
during this holy season of joy
as we anticipate the coming of Jesus Christ. Amen.

Thursday
December 3, 2020

Historic Wesleyan Question:

Can I be trusted?

Scripture

Mark 13:24-37

13:24 "But in those days, after that suffering, the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light,

13:25 and the stars will be falling from heaven, and the powers in the heavens will be shaken.

13:26 Then they will see 'the Son of Man coming in clouds' with great power and glory.

13:27 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.

13:28 "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.

13:29 So also, when you see these things taking place, you know that he is near, at the very gates.

13:30 Truly I tell you, this generation will not pass away until all these things have taken place.

13:31 Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away.

13:32 "But about that day or hour no one knows, neither the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father.

13:33 Beware, keep alert; for you do not know when the time will come.

13:34 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.

13:35 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,

13:36 or else he may find you asleep when he comes suddenly.

13:37 And what I say to you I say to all: Keep awake."

Prayer

Creator of the world, you are the potter, we are the clay, and you form us in your image. Shape our spirits by Christ's transforming power, that as one people we may live out your compassion and justice, whole and sound in the realm of your peace. Amen.

Friday
December 4, 2020

Historic Wesleyan Question:

Am I a slave to dress, friends, work, or habits?

Advent Expectations

Think back to your prayer from Sunday.

Have you seen God answer it this week?

Are you still waiting for God to show up, and if so, what have you learned about waiting for God?

Prayer

“Zechariah’s Song”

(The traditional morning prayer of the church)

Luke 1:68-79

⁶⁸ “Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, he has looked favorably on his people and redeemed them.

⁶⁹ He has raised up a mighty savior for us in the house of his servant David,

⁷⁰ as he spoke through the mouth of his holy prophets from of old,

⁷¹ that we would be saved from our enemies and from the hand of all who hate us.

⁷² Thus he has shown the mercy promised to our ancestors, and has remembered his holy

covenant,⁷³ the oath that he swore to our ancestor Abraham,

to grant us ⁷⁴ that we, being rescued from the hands of our enemies,
might serve him without fear, ⁷⁵ in holiness and righteousness before him all our days.

⁷⁶ And you, child, will be called the prophet of the Most High;

for you will go before the Lord to prepare his ways,

⁷⁷ to give knowledge of salvation to his people by the forgiveness of their sins.

⁷⁸ By the tender mercy of our God, the dawn from on high will break upon ⁷⁹ us,

⁷⁹ to give light to those who sit in darkness and in the shadow of death,

to guide our feet into the way of peace.”

Saturday
December 5, 2020

Historic Wesleyan Question:

Am I self-conscious, self-pitying, or self-justifying?

Scripture

2 Peter 3:8-15a

3:8 But do not ignore this one fact, beloved, that with the Lord one day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years are like one day.

3:9 The Lord is not slow about his promise, as some think of slowness, but is patient with you, not wanting any to perish, but all to come to repentance.

3:10 But the day of the Lord will come like a thief, and then the heavens will pass away with a loud noise, and the elements will be dissolved with fire, and the earth and everything that is done on it will be disclosed.

3:11 Since all these things are to be dissolved in this way, what sort of persons ought you to be in leading lives of holiness and godliness,

3:12 waiting for and hastening the coming of the day of God, because of which the heavens will be set ablaze and dissolved, and the elements will melt with fire?

3:13 But, in accordance with his promise, we wait for new heavens and a new earth, where righteousness is at home.

3:14 Therefore, beloved, while you are waiting for these things, strive to be found by him at peace, without spot or blemish;

3:15a and regard the patience of our Lord as salvation. So also our beloved brother Paul wrote to you according to the wisdom given him.

Prayer

Take this moment to sit in silence, and dismiss yourself by saying "Amen" when you feel moved to continue with your day.

Sunday
December 6, 2020

Sermon Reflection Questions:

What is something you are excited to see or know when Jesus comes back?

What is one way you have experienced that or learned about it here?

Every week we pray "your kingdom come; your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven." When have you seen God answer that prayer?

The Next Step

How might God use you this week to help others see what God's kingdom is like?

Prayer

Take a moment to offer your own prayer, asking God to help heaven and earth overlap in you this week.

Monday
December 7, 2020

Historic Wesleyan Question:

Did the Bible live in me today?

Scripture

Isaiah 40:1-11

40:1 Comfort, O comfort my people, says your God.

40:2 Speak tenderly to Jerusalem, and cry to her that she has served her term, that her penalty is paid, that she has received from the Lord's hand double for all her sins.

40:3 A voice cries out: "In the wilderness prepare the way of the LORD, make straight in the desert a highway for our God.

40:4 Every valley shall be lifted up, and every mountain and hill be made low; the uneven ground shall become level, and the rough places a plain.

40:5 Then the glory of the LORD shall be revealed, and all people shall see it together, for the mouth of the LORD has spoken."

40:6 A voice says, "Cry out!" And I said, "What shall I cry?" All people are grass, their constancy is like the flower of the field.

40:7 The grass withers, the flower fades, when the breath of the LORD blows upon it; surely the people are grass.

40:8 The grass withers, the flower fades; but the word of our God will stand forever.

40:9 Get you up to a high mountain, O Zion, herald of good tidings; lift up your voice with strength, O Jerusalem, herald of good tidings, lift it up, do not fear; say to the cities of Judah, "Here is your God!"

40:10 See, the Lord GOD comes with might, and his arm rules for him; his reward is with him, and his recompense before him.

40:11 He will feed his flock like a shepherd; he will gather the lambs in his arms, and carry them in his bosom, and gently lead the mother sheep.

Prayer

God of timeless grace, you fill us with joyful expectation. Make us ready for the message that prepares the way, that with uprightness of heart and holy joy we may eagerly await the kingdom of your Son, Jesus Christ, who reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, now and for ever. Amen.

Tuesday
December 8, 2020

Historic Wesleyan Question:

Do I give Scripture time to speak to me every day?

Scripture

Psalm 85:1-2, 8-13

85:1 LORD, you were favorable to your land; you restored the fortunes of Jacob.

85:2 You forgave the iniquity of your people; you pardoned all their sin. Selah

85:8 Let me hear what God the LORD will speak, for he will speak peace to his people, to his faithful, to those who turn to him in their hearts.

85:9 Surely his salvation is at hand for those who fear him, that his glory may dwell in our land.

85:10 Steadfast love and faithfulness will meet; righteousness and peace will kiss each other.

85:11 Faithfulness will spring up from the ground, and righteousness will look down from the sky.

85:12 The LORD will give what is good, and our land will yield its increase.

85:13 Righteousness will go before him and will make a path for his steps.

Prayer

Take a moment to pray for the needs of our church and the world.

Wednesday
December 9, 2020

Historic Wesleyan Question:

Am I enjoying prayer?

Scripture

1 Corinthians 15:19-26

19 If for this life only we have hoped in Christ, we are of all people most to be pitied.

20 But in fact Christ has been raised from the dead, the first fruits of those who have died.[f] 21 For since death came through a human being, the resurrection of the dead has also come through a human being; 22 for as all die in Adam, so all will be made alive in Christ. 23 But each in his own order: Christ the first fruits, then at his coming those who belong to Christ. 24 Then comes the end,[g] when he hands over the kingdom to God the Father, after he has destroyed every ruler and every authority and power. 25 For he must reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet. 26 The last enemy to be destroyed is death.

Prayer

Lord, hear our humble prayer that we may serve you in holiness and faith and give voice to your presence among us until the day of the coming of your Son, Jesus Christ, who lives and reigns for ever and ever. Amen.

Thursday
December 10, 2020

Historic Wesleyan Question:

When did I last speak to someone else about my faith?

Scripture

Mark 13:24-37

- 13:24 "But in those days, after that suffering, the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light,
13:25 and the stars will be falling from heaven, and the powers in the heavens will be shaken.
13:26 Then they will see 'the Son of Man coming in clouds' with great power and glory.
13:27 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.
13:28 "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.
13:29 So also, when you see these things taking place, you know that he is near, at the very gates.
13:30 Truly I tell you, this generation will not pass away until all these things have taken place.
13:31 Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away.
13:32 "But about that day or hour no one knows, neither the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father.
13:33 Beware, keep alert; for you do not know when the time will come.
13:34 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.
13:35 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,
13:36 or else he may find you asleep when he comes suddenly.
13:37 And what I say to you I say to all: Keep awake."
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Prayer

God of hope, you call us from the exile of our sin with the good news of restoration; you build a highway through the wilderness; you come to us and bring us home. Comfort us with the expectation of your saving power, made known to us in Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Friday
December 11, 2020

Historic Wesleyan Question:

Do I pray about the money I spend?

Advent Expectations

Think back to your prayer from Sunday.

Have you seen God answer it this week?

Are you still waiting for God to show up, and if so, what have you learned about waiting for God?

Prayer

"Mary's Song"

(The traditional midday prayer of the church)

Luke 1:46-55

⁴⁶ "My soul magnifies the Lord,

⁴⁷ and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior,

⁴⁸ for he has looked with favor on the lowliness of his servant.

Surely, from now on all generations will call me blessed;

⁴⁹ for the Mighty One has done great things for me,

and holy is his name.

⁵⁰ His mercy is for those who fear him

from generation to generation.

⁵¹ He has shown strength with his arm;

he has scattered the proud in the thoughts of their hearts.

⁵² He has brought down the powerful from their thrones,

and lifted up the lowly;

⁵³ he has filled the hungry with good things,

and sent the rich away empty.

⁵⁴ He has helped his servant Israel,

in remembrance of his mercy,

⁵⁵ according to the promise he made to our ancestors,

to Abraham and to his descendants forever."

Saturday
December 12, 2020

Historic Wesleyan Question:

Do I get to bed on time and get up on time?

Scripture

Isaiah 61:1-4, 8-11

61:1 The spirit of the Lord GOD is upon me, because the LORD has anointed me; he has sent me to bring good news to the oppressed, to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and release to the prisoners;

61:2 to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor, and the day of vengeance of our God; to comfort all who mourn;

61:3 to provide for those who mourn in Zion-- to give them a garland instead of ashes, the oil of gladness instead of mourning, the mantle of praise instead of a faint spirit. They will be called oaks of righteousness, the planting of the LORD, to display his glory.

61:4 They shall build up the ancient ruins, they shall raise up the former devastations; they shall repair the ruined cities, the devastations of many generations.

61:8 For I the LORD love justice, I hate robbery and wrongdoing; I will faithfully give them their recompense, and I will make an everlasting covenant with them.

61:9 Their descendants shall be known among the nations, and their offspring among the peoples; all who see them shall acknowledge that they are a people whom the LORD has blessed.

61:10 I will greatly rejoice in the LORD, my whole being shall exult in my God; for he has clothed me with the garments of salvation, he has covered me with the robe of righteousness, as a bridegroom decks himself with a garland, and as a bride adorns herself with her jewels.

61:11 For as the earth brings forth its shoots, and as a garden causes what is sown in it to spring up, so the Lord GOD will cause righteousness and praise to spring up before all the nations.

Prayer

Take this moment to sit in silence, and dismiss yourself by saying "Amen" when you feel moved to continue with your day.

Sunday
December 13, 2020

Sermon Reflection Questions:

When do you think other people have most "pressed you" because of your faith?

Has God ever blessed you in the middle of a bad situation?

Are there some of God's blessings that you try to avoid (you might want to read Matthew 5:1-12 for some examples)?

The Next Step

What do you think will be the hardest thing about the week ahead of you?

Prayer

Take a moment to offer your own prayer, asking God to bless the hardest thing ahead of you.

Monday
December 14, 2020

Historic Wesleyan Question:

Do I disobey God in anything?

Scripture

Isaiah 11:1-10

11:1 A shoot shall come out from the stump of Jesse, and a branch shall grow out of his roots.

11:2 The spirit of the LORD shall 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.

11:3 His delight shall be in the fear of the LORD. He shall not judge by what his eyes see, or decide by what his ears hear;

11:4 but with righteousness he shall judge the poor, and decide with equity for the meek of the earth; he shall strike the earth with the rod of his mouth, and with the breath of his lips he shall kill the wicked.

11:5 Righteousness shall be the belt around his waist, and faithfulness the belt around his loins.

11:6 The wolf shall live with the lamb, the leopard shall lie down with the kid, the calf and the lion and the fatling together, and a little child shall lead them.

11:7 The cow and the bear shall graze, their young shall lie down together; and the lion shall eat straw like the ox.

11:8 The nursing child shall play over the hole of the asp, and the weaned child shall put its hand on the adder's den.

11:9 They will not hurt or destroy on all my holy mountain; for the earth will be full of the knowledge of the LORD as the waters cover the sea.

11:10 On that day the root of Jesse shall stand as a signal to the peoples; the nations shall inquire of him, and his dwelling shall be glorious.

Prayer

Laboring God, with axe and winnowing fork you clear a holy space where hurt and destruction have no place, and a little child holds sway. Clear our lives of hatred and despair, sow seeds of joy and peace, that shoots of hope may spring forth and we may live in harmony with one another. Amen.

Tuesday
December 15, 2020

Historic Wesleyan Question:

Do I insist upon doing something about which my conscience is uneasy?

Scripture

Psalm 126

126:1 When the LORD restored the fortunes of Zion, we were like those who dream.

126:2 Then our mouth was filled with laughter, and our tongue with shouts of joy; then it was said among the nations, "The LORD has done great things for them."

126:3 The LORD has done great things for us, and we rejoiced.

126:4 Restore our fortunes, O LORD, like the watercourses in the Negeb.

126:5 May those who sow in tears reap with shouts of joy.

126:6 Those who go out weeping, bearing the seed for sowing, shall come home with shouts of joy, carrying their sheaves.

Prayer

Take a moment to pray for the needs of our church and the world.

Wednesday
December 16, 2020

Historic Wesleyan Question:

Am I defeated in any part of my life?

Scripture

Luke 1:46b-55

1:46b "My soul magnifies the Lord,

1:47 and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior,

1:48 for he has looked with favor on the lowliness of his servant. Surely, from now on all generations will call me blessed;

1:49 for the Mighty One has done great things for me, and holy is his name.

1:50 His mercy is for those who fear him from generation to generation.

1:51 He has shown strength with his arm; he has scattered the proud in the thoughts of their hearts.

1:52 He has brought down the powerful from their thrones, and lifted up the lowly;

1:53 he has filled the hungry with good things, and sent the rich away empty.

1:54 He has helped his servant Israel, in remembrance of his mercy,

1:55 according to the promise he made to our ancestors, to Abraham and to his descendants forever."

Prayer

God of hope, you call us home from the exile of selfish oppression to the freedom of justice, the balm of healing, and the joy of sharing. Make us strong to join you in your holy work, as friends of strangers and victims, companions of those whom others shun, and as the happiness of those whose hearts are broken. We make our prayer through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Amen.

Thursday
December 17, 2020

Historic Wesleyan Question:

Am I jealous of anyone?

Scripture

1 Thessalonians 5:16-24

5:16 Rejoice always,

5:17 pray without ceasing,

5:18 give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.

5:19 Do not quench the Spirit.

5:20 Do not despise the words of prophets,

5:21 but test everything; hold fast to what is good;

5:22 abstain from every form of evil.

5:23 May the God of peace himself sanctify you entirely; and may your spirit and soul and body be kept sound and blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.

5:24 The one who calls you is faithful, and he will do this.

Prayer

God of joy and exultation, you strengthen what is weak; you enrich the poor and give hope to those who live in fear. Look upon our needs this day. Make us grateful for the good news of salvation, and keep us faithful in your service until the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, who lives for ever and ever. Amen.

Friday
December 18, 2020

Historic Wesleyan Question:

Am I impure, critical, irritable, touchy, or distrustful?

Advent Expectations

Think back to your prayer from Sunday.

Have you seen God answer it this week?

Are you still waiting for God to show up, and if so, what have you learned about waiting for God?

Prayer

“Simeon’s Song”

(The traditional evening prayer of the church)

Luke 2:29-32

²⁹Now, Lord, let your servant go in peace,
according to your word;
³⁰for my eyes have seen your salvation,
³¹which you have prepared in the presence of all peoples,
³²a light for revelation to the Gentiles
and for glory to your people Israel.”

Saturday
December 19, 2020

Historic Wesleyan Question:

How do I spend my spare time?

Scripture

Luke 1:26-38

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."^[a] 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?"^[b] 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^[c] 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.

Prayer

Take this moment to sit in silence, and dismiss yourself by saying "Amen" when you feel moved to continue with your day.

Sunday
December 20, 2020

Sermon Reflection Questions:

How do you describe where God is?

Are there places that seem "extra holy" to you?

How do you feel about the idea that you are a temple where God lives?

The Next Step

The early Christians called Mary the *theotokos*, the "Christ-bearer." Where would you like to be a Christ-bearer this week?

Prayer

Take a moment to offer your own prayer, asking God to help you remember that you carry Christ everywhere you go.

Monday
December 21, 2020

Historic Wesleyan Question:

Am I proud?

Scripture

2 Samuel 7:1-11, 16

7:1 Now when the king was settled in his house, and the LORD had given him rest from all his enemies around him,

7:2 the king said to the prophet Nathan, "See now, I am living in a house of cedar, but the ark of God stays in a tent."

7:3 Nathan said to the king, "Go, do all that you have in mind; for the LORD is with you."

7:4 But that same night the word of the LORD came to Nathan:

7:5 Go and tell my servant David: Thus says the LORD: Are you the one to build me a house to live in?

7:6 I have not lived in a house since the day I brought up the people of Israel from Egypt to this day, but I have been moving about in a tent and a tabernacle.

7:7 Wherever I have moved about among all the people of Israel, did I ever speak a word with any of the tribal leaders of Israel, whom I commanded to shepherd my people Israel, saying, "Why have you not built me a house of cedar?"

7:8 Now therefore thus you shall say to my servant David: Thus says the LORD of hosts: I took you from the pasture, from following the sheep to be prince over my people Israel;

7:9 and I have been with you wherever you went, and have cut off all your enemies from before you; and I will make for you a great name, like the name of the great ones of the earth.

7:10 And I will appoint a place for my people Israel and will plant them, so that they may live in their place, and be disturbed no more; and evildoers shall afflict them no more, as formerly,

7:11 from the time that I appointed judges over my people Israel; and I will give you rest from all your enemies. Moreover the LORD declares to you that the LORD will make you a house.

7:16 Your house and your kingdom shall be made sure forever before me; your throne shall be established forever.

Prayer

Merciful God of peace, your word, spoken by the prophets, restores your people's life and hope. Fill our hearts with the joy of your saving grace, that we may hold fast to your great goodness and in our lives proclaim your justice in all the world. Amen.

Tuesday
December 22, 2020

Historic Wesleyan Question:

Do I thank God that I am not as other people, especially as the Pharisees who despised the publican?

Scripture

Luke 1:39-45

1:39 In those days Mary set out and went with haste to a Judean town in the hill country,

1:40 where she entered the house of Zechariah and greeted Elizabeth.

1:41 When Elizabeth heard Mary's greeting, the child leaped in her womb. And Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit

1:42 and exclaimed with a loud cry, "Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb.

1:43 And why has this happened to me, that the mother of my Lord comes to me?

1:44 For as soon as I heard the sound of your greeting, the child in my womb leaped for joy.

1:45 And blessed is she who believed that there would be^{ful} a fulfillment of what was spoken to her by the Lord.

Prayer

O God of Elizabeth and Mary, you visited your servants with news of the world's redemption in the coming of the Savior. Make our hearts leap with joy, and fill our mouths with songs of praise, that we may announce glad tidings of peace, and welcome the Christ in our midst. Amen.

Wednesday
December 23, 2020

Historic Wesleyan Question:

Is there anyone whom I fear, dislike, disown, criticize, hold a resentment toward, or disregard? If so, what am I doing about it?

Scripture

Psalms 89:1-4, 19-26

89:1 I will sing of your steadfast love, O LORD, forever; with my mouth I will proclaim your faithfulness to all generations.

89:2 I declare that your steadfast love is established forever; your faithfulness is as firm as the heavens.

89:3 You said, "I have made a covenant with my chosen one, I have sworn to my servant David:

89:4 'I will establish your descendants forever, and build your throne for all generations.'" Selah

89:19 Then you spoke in a vision to your faithful one, and said: "I have set the crown on one who is mighty, I have exalted one chosen from the people.

89:20 I have found my servant David; with my holy oil I have anointed him;

89:21 my hand shall always remain with him; my arm also shall strengthen him.

89:22 The enemy shall not outwit him, the wicked shall not humble him.

89:23 I will crush his foes before him and strike down those who hate him.

89:24 My faithfulness and steadfast love shall be with him; and in my name his horn shall be exalted.

89:25 I will set his hand on the sea and his right hand on the rivers.

89:26 He shall cry to me, 'You are my Father, my God, and the Rock of my salvation!'

Prayer

Take a moment to pray for the needs of our church and the world.

Thursday
December 24, 2020

Historic Wesleyan Question:

Do I grumble or complain constantly?

Scripture

Romans 16:25-27

16:25 Now to God who is able to strengthen you according to my gospel and the proclamation of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery that was kept secret for long ages

16:26 but is now disclosed, and through the prophetic writings is made known to all the Gentiles, according to the command of the eternal God, to bring about the obedience of faith --

16:27 to the only wise God, through Jesus Christ, to whom be the glory forever! Amen.

Prayer

God of promise, you have given us a sign of your love through the gift of Jesus Christ, our Savior, who was promised from ages past. We believe as Joseph did the message of your presence whispered by an angel, and offer our prayers for your world, confident of your care and mercy for all creation. Amen.

Friday
December 25, 2020

Historic Wesleyan Question:

Is Christ real to me?

Scripture

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.

The Shepherds and the Angels

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,[a] 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,[b] 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."

Prayer

Ever faithful God, through prophets and angels, you promised to raise up a holy child who would establish a household of peace and justice. Open our hearts to receive your Son, that we may open our doors to welcome all people as sisters and brothers, and establish your household in our time. Amen.

