



**Saturday, November 27**

Read Matthew 24:1-35 in preparation for tomorrow's sermon.

**Sunday, November 28**

The first Sunday in Advent

Participate in the service as you attend church with your church family or watch at home via live stream.

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## **Monday, November 29**

**Read:** Matthew 24:1-35

### **Reflect:**

- People have been predicting the end times since the earliest days of the church. And yet, we know that no one knows the day or hour. When you read a passage like this, where do your thoughts go?
- We often seem surprised by hard times, as if they are somehow out of the ordinary and when they pass, we will go back to “normal.” But in the world’s brokenness, there is always devastation, conflict, and decay. What promise does Jesus give us that gives you hope in the midst?

**Prayer:** Lord God, You are our refuge, our safe place. The times are in your hands, and you reign over all the earth. You are completely trustworthy, the faithful One whose love endures forever. When we are afraid, help us to rest in your love, trusting your perfect plan. And may we be ready to share with others the reason for our hope.

## **Tuesday, November 30**

**Read:** Matthew 24:1-35

### **Reflect:**

- Think back to Sunday’s message. What take away do you have as you live your life on this Tuesday?

**Prayer:** God of all creation, we gather with fellow believers of our community on Sunday and together we join with people of God from all across the world to worship you. Thank you for the bond of Christ that makes us brothers and sisters. Help us to live each day in worship and to let the learnings and spiritual passion of Sunday morning impact the way we live this day and every day.



## ADVENT CONSPIRACY

As a church, this year we are joining the Advent Conspiracy. If you haven't heard about it, visit [AdventConspiracy.org](http://AdventConspiracy.org) or our church website and Facebook group for more information.

The first week of Advent is one to focus on worshipping fully. Throughout Advent this year, devotions that align with the Advent Conspiracy will be sprinkled through the days and weeks. Some are from our own members and some from across the nation and the world. The next two are from our own Sarah Moyer.

scan here to visit  
[AdventConspiracy.org](http://AdventConspiracy.org)



## Wednesday, December 1

**Read:** Isaiah 9:6 *For to us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government will be on his shoulders. And he will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.*

This is GOOD NEWS! Israel needed – and we need – a Savior who is all of these things. Have you ever looked at a list of Jesus' names? There is incredible breadth in the Bible's revelation of who He is. This Advent, as you meditate on the miracle of the baby Jesus – Immanuel, God With Us – also consider and celebrate the characteristics of Jesus that Isaiah foretold seven hundred years before His birth.

### **How can we share the good news of Jesus' birth, as witnesses to the Christmas miracle?**

As Christians, we are being transformed into the image of Christ (2 Corinthians 3:18). We are called to *live* and *love others* in ways that reflect Jesus's love for us, for example...

- Offering wise, Godly counsel to others and seeking wisdom from our Wonderful Counselor through prayer
- Behaving like we trust the strength and authority of our Mighty God
- Displaying a hope-filled attitude, knowing we will never be separated from the Everlasting Father
- Being agents of peace, and trusting the Prince of Peace to calm storms and end conflict
- Boldly and clearly pointing others to the Jesus they see reflected in us

**Prayer:** Lord, we are so thankful that you are our Wonderful Counselor, Almighty God, and Everlasting Father. You are the Prince of Peace and give peace to all whose minds are fixed on you. As Peter needed to keep his eyes on Jesus to keep from sinking, help us to keep our eyes fixed on you in the storms of life.

## Thursday, December 2

**Read:** Isaiah 9:6 (NIV). *For to us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government will be on his shoulders. And he will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.*

**Reflect:** How can we prepare our hearts to worship ALL that Jesus is – the humble infant *and* the one who is above all earthly powers the Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, and Prince of Peace?

**Pray:** Choose one of the names of Jesus and use it to build a prayer. Use the PRAY model to...

- **PRAISE** Him for the goodness associated with that characteristic.
- **REPENT** for the ways you have not fully believed or trusted that He is who He says He is.
- **ASK** for Jesus to show up in your life in ways consistent with His name.
- **YIELD** to His counsel, or might, or everlastingness, or peace, etc. Invite *that* Jesus in.

A prayer focused on Wonderful Counselor:

Jesus, you are the Wonderful Counselor. Your infinite wisdom created and ordered the universe. When I breathe in the crisp, clear starry night, or see withered fields and foliage preparing for spring rebirth, I catch glimpses of the intricacy and intelligence of your work and am filled with wonder. I know that You also care deeply about ME and provide wise, loving, perfect counsel through answered prayer and your Holy Spirit. Thank you for the ways you guide my steps and reveal your wisdom. I confess that I often forget to seek your counsel, and when I do, sometimes your answer to my prayer falls on unreceptive ears. Give me clear counsel today.

Specifically, show me/guide me/reveal to me \_\_\_\_\_. Speak wisdom into [a situation I am facing]. I yield to you. I trust you to lead me on a path that is right and good. Jesus, Wonderful Counselor, as I follow your leading, continue to transform me into your image-bearer. Amen.

**There are many names of God.  
What are some that come to mind for you?  
Can you share a prayer focused on one of those names?**

### **Friday, December 3**

We have focused on the Matthew 24 passage and prophetic words from Isaiah 9:6. How can you worship our King more fully this season?

### **Saturday, December 4**

**Read:** 2 Peter 3:1-15 in preparation for tomorrow's sermon.

**Pray:** That our worship will bring pleasure to God and blessing to us as we worship together. Pray, too, that our spending this season will reflect values centered on the true meaning of Christmas.

### **Sunday, December 5**

Participate in the service as you attend church with your church family or watch at home via live stream.

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## Monday, December 6

**Read:** 2 Peter 3:8-9

*<sup>8</sup>But do not forget this one thing, dear friends: With the LORD a day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years are like a day. <sup>9</sup>The LORD is not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness. Instead, he is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance.*

- When we are in traffic, time seems to move S-L-O-W-L-Y. When with those we love, time rushes by. We tell a child we will be with them in a moment and to them, it feels like eons of neglect. To the LORD, a day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years are like a day. Perhaps our concept of time is completely different from God's.
- Have you thought about God's delay in returning as patience? Our merciful God wants everyone to come to repentance. And yet, he assures us that last days are coming. How then ought we to live?

**Pray:** Lord, we thank you that you are patient, want no one to perish, and all to repent. Forgive us for writing off anyone when YOU are so very patient. Forgive us for doubting your timing which is always perfect. Help us to trust your plan and to live so well that others give thanks to you.

**Tuesday, December 7**

**Read:** 2 Peter 3:10

*<sup>10</sup>But the day of the LORD will come like a thief. The heavens will disappear with a roar; the elements will be destroyed by fire, and the earth and everything done in it will be laid bare.*

**Reflect:**

- These words of end times sound terrifying and violent. We tend to focus on God's mercy and compassion, but he is also just. Verse 7 says "the present heavens and earth are reserved for fire, being kept for the day of judgment and destruction of the ungodly." How do you reconcile God's compassion and mercy with judgment and destruction?
- The Bible is full of paradox. Can you hold the tension of God's mercy and justice? Of God giving faith and his people choosing him? The importance of works as we live by faith? There is mystery in our faith as God's ways are not ours.

**Pray:** Lord, your thoughts are not our thoughts, and your ways are not our ways. Help us to trust you and your plans. Thank you for your patience and for your assurance of salvation for all who come to you in faith. We take refuge in you.

## **Wednesday, December 8**

**Read:** 2 Peter 3:14

*<sup>4</sup>So then, dear friends, since you are looking forward to this, make every effort to be found spotless, blameless and at peace with him.*

### **Reflect:**

- How do we make every effort to be found spotless, blameless, and at peace with God?
- Does this impact how we celebrate Advent and Christmas?

**Pray:** Lord Jesus, thank you for covering us with your own rightness, for forgiving all our sins, for putting us at peace with God. Thank you for letting us hear your voice above the noise. The gift of your peace and extravagant love are share-worthy Good News.

## Thursday, December 9

This week's focus in the Advent Conspiracy is to Spend Less. It is a challenge in our culture! Here is a prayer from the Advent Conspiracy to help us.

*God of everything I need-Thank you for being my provider. Thank You for all of the ways that You sustain me. Thank You for the food on my table and on my shelves. Thank You for the shelter over my head. Thank You for places to sit and recline. Thank You for the place I have to rest my head. Thank You for the friends and family around me. Help me to rest and be content. As I move through my world today, help me to be content. Remind me of all the ways You provide for me and my family. Help me to keep my eyes focused on You, the God who provides, not on my material possessions. Keep me from straying to the idol of 'more.' Forgive me for the times where I have turned to my things instead of You. You alone are my salvation and my joy. You alone are my peace. Forgive me for the times I've made an idol out of the blessings You have given me. You are enough for me.*

**Friday, December 10**

**This is an Advent devotion from Children's Ministry Co-Director,  
Kim Smith**

No Room

I struggle to be mindful and present when there is so much to do and see during the Christmas season. I often feel rushed and anxious. I live by my to-do list often completing one task just to get to the next, not making room for Jesus or the real meaning of Christmas and so I pray for guidance and clarity to help with the busyness of the season.

Luke tells us there was no room for Mary and Joseph in the inn at Bethlehem (Luke 2:7). Jesus was born into a world of people that had no room for him. And later in life he was hated and rejected. "He came to that which was his own, but his own did not receive him."

In this Advent season, is there room in your heart for the Lord Jesus? So many things can fill our lives and make us busy: family, friends, careers, activities, and the general busyness of life. But do we have room for the Lord Jesus, and for others who need to know His love?

Our hearts are a lot like the Inn sometimes - no vacancy. No room at the Inn because it's filled with the seemingly urgent but ultimately unimportant.

**Prayer:** Lord Jesus, don't let us miss you this Christmas season. Help us to simplify our activities and traditions so we can focus our celebration on Your birth. So often we do not make room for you and others. Fill our hearts, and by your grace help us to help others. Fill our hearts with peace so we can make room for you.

## **Saturday, December 11**

**Read:** Isaiah 40:27-31 and Luke 1:39-55 in preparation for tomorrow's worship

## **Sunday, December 12**

Participate in the service as you attend church with your church family or watch at home via live stream.

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## Monday, December 13

**Read:** Isaiah 40:29-31

*<sup>29</sup>He gives strength to the weary and increases the power of the weak. <sup>30</sup>Even youths grow tired and weary, and young men stumble and fall; <sup>31</sup>but those who hope in the LORD will renew their strength. They will soar on wings like eagles; they will run and not grow weary, they will walk and not be faint.*

### **Reflect:**

- The pandemic, flood, tornado, and politics of the past many months have led to weariness. Filling Advent with too many expectations and commitments can also be wearisome. But when we focus our hope on the LORD, our perspective changes. Yes, we weary. Yes, we stumble. But our LORD will lift us up and renew our strength.

**Pray:** LORD, we thank you for the encouraging words from the prophet Isaiah. We thank you that you are strong when we are weak. May our walk be always with you, our hope and strength.

## Tuesday, December 14

**Read:** Luke 1:39-42

*<sup>39</sup> In those days Mary arose and went with haste into the hill country, to a town in Judah, <sup>40</sup> and she entered the house of Zechariah and greeted Elizabeth. <sup>41</sup> And when Elizabeth heard the greeting of Mary, the baby leaped in her womb. And Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit, <sup>42</sup> and she exclaimed with a loud cry, "Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb!"*

### Reflect:

- Mary, an unmarried teen, was pregnant by the Holy Spirit. Can you imagine how encouraging it was for her to visit her cousin who "got it?" She likely experienced many knowing looks...And then came her cousin's blessing. What a gift.
- Can you think of a time when you were misunderstood until someone "saw" you? Perhaps a time you were following the Spirit in faith, and someone misconstrued? What a gift when someone sees the Holy Spirit at work in you. A cause for both to rejoice.

**Pray:** Lord, God, please keep our ears tuned in to your Holy Spirit. May we have the courage to accept whatever you have for us. Please send us encouragement along the way and use us to encourage others.

As Mary said in her beautiful prayer,  
your mercy is for those who fear you  
from generation to generation.

You have shown strength with your arm and have  
scattered the proud in the thoughts of their hearts;  
you have brought down the mighty from their thrones  
and exalted those of humble estate;

<sup>53</sup> you have filled the hungry with good things,  
and the rich you have sent away empty. Amen and amen!

## Wednesday, December 15

The Advent Conspiracy focus this week is to “Give More: the gift of meaningful connection.” When we reflect on who God is and the priceless gift we have in Jesus, we are drawn to give of ourselves. Focusing on the many names of God draws us deeper into worship. The next two devotions were written by our own Sarah Moyer and lead us into the names of God.

### **Read:** Isaiah 9:6 (NIV)

*For to us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government will be on his shoulders. And he will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.*

This is GOOD NEWS! Israel needed – and we need – a Savior who is all of these things. Have you ever looked at a list of Jesus’ names? There is incredible breadth in the Bible’s revelation of who He is. This Advent, as you meditate on the miracle of the baby Jesus – Immanuel, God With Us – also consider and celebrate the characteristics of Jesus that Isaiah foretold 700 years before His birth.

### **How can we share the good news of Jesus’ birth, as witnesses to the Christmas miracle?**

As Christians, we are being transformed into the image of Christ (2 Corinthians 3:18). We are called to *live* and *love others* in ways that reflect Jesus’s love for us, for example...

- Offering wise, Godly counsel to others and seeking wisdom from our Wonderful Counselor through prayer
- Behaving like we trust the strength and authority of our Mighty God
- Displaying a hope-filled attitude, knowing we will never be separated from the Everlasting Father
- Being agents of peace, and trusting the Prince of Peace to calm storms and end conflict
- Boldly and clearly pointing others to the Jesus they see reflected in us

## Thursday, December 16

**Read:** Isaiah 9:6 (NIV)

*For to us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government will be on his shoulders. And he will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.*

**How can we prepare our hearts to worship ALL that Jesus is – the humble infant *and* the one who is above all earthly powers... the Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, and Prince of Peace?**

Choose one of the names of Jesus and use it to build a prayer. Use the PRAY model to:

- **PRAISE** Him for the goodness associated with that characteristic.
- **REPENT** for the ways you have not fully believed or trusted that He is who He says He is.
- **ASK** for Jesus to show up in your life in ways consistent with His name.
- **YIELD** to His counsel, or might, or everlastingness, or peace, etc. Invite *that* Jesus in.

A prayer focused on Wonderful Counselor:

Jesus, you are the Wonderful Counselor. Your infinite wisdom created and ordered the universe. When I breathe in the crisp, clear starry night, or see withered fields and foliage preparing for spring rebirth, I catch glimpses of the intricacy and intelligence of your work and am filled with wonder. I know that You also care deeply about ME and provide wise, loving, perfect counsel through answered prayer and your Holy Spirit. Thank you for the ways you guide my steps and reveal your wisdom. I confess that I often forget to seek your counsel, and when I do, sometimes your answer to my prayer falls on unreceptive ears. Give me clear counsel today. Specifically, show me/guide me/reveal to me \_\_\_\_\_.

Speak wisdom into \_\_\_ [*a situation I am facing*]. I yield to you. I trust you to lead me on a path that is right and good. Jesus, Wonderful Counselor, as I follow your leading, continue to transform me into your image-bearer. Amen.

## **Friday, December 17**

Google “names of God.” Really! Prayerfully read through the many names of God. Which names speak to you today, right now in your present state? Write them down and meditate on them. Can you share a prayer focused on one of those names?

## **Saturday, December 18**

**Read:** Luke 1:26-38; Romans 16:25-27 in preparation for tomorrow’s sermon.

## **Sunday, December 19**

Participate in the service as you attend church with your church family or watch at home via live stream.

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## **Monday, December 20**

**Read:** Luke 1:26-38 and Romans 16:25-27

### **Reflect:**

- We learn from these passages that faith and obedience are linked. Mary received an announcement that was going to change her life in profound ways but would not make it easy! Her response? “I am the Lord’s servant.”
- The Romans passage reminds us that we Gentiles are invited to come to the obedience that comes through faith.
- What does God ask of us? And what is our response?

**Prayer:** Lord, we are honored that you have called us to be your people, holy and chosen. You call us to live in ways that set us apart from others in our culture and in all the world. To bless enemies, to give extravagantly, to extend hospitality to those who will be unable to reciprocate. Help us to set aside the values of our culture and our own natural self-centeredness to joyfully respond, “Yes, Lord, I am your servant.”

**Tuesday, December 21**

**Read:** Romans 16:25-27

**Reflect:**

- In our culture we try to add mystery to Christmas as we speak of Santa Claus and commercial interests encourage us to “Believe.” But Christmas and the whole Gospel story is already full of deep mystery. Prophetic writings fulfilled. Revelation of a mystery hidden for long ages. A surprising and victorious ending.
- The angel told Mary not to be afraid. Angels seem to say that a lot! Living out the mystery of our faith can be a fearsome thing, but we have reason for confidence. What an honor to be woven into the amazing tapestry of God’s magnificent plan.
- Elizabeth gave birth in her old age. Jesus’ birth was miraculous. Have you experienced the miraculous in your life? Perhaps less dramatic, but answers to prayer and situations in which you have seen the hand of God? Hold onto such things.

**Prayer:** Amazing God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, we thank you for the mystery of your being, your presence, and your work in your creation. We open our hearts and hands to you and ask you to fill us, guide us, and use us for your purposes. Thank you for the honor of serving you.

## **Wednesday, December 22**

**Read:** *1 John 4:19 We love because he first loved us. John 3:16 For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son so that whoever believes in him might have everlasting life.*

### **Reflect:**

- The fourth tenet of the Advent Conspiracy is to Love All. Is that not what Christmas is all about? The miraculous birth of Jesus fulfilled ancient prophecy in surprising ways and took place because of God's great love for us.
- There are so many needs among the people God loves. Who can you reach out to in love today? What need can you meet in obedience to God's call to love one another and in thanksgiving for his great love for you? We love because he first loved us and that makes all the difference. Ask God to give you his love for people.

**Prayer:** Dear God, we are so thankful for your amazing love. May we delight in finding ways to bless your people, to love them in ways that are surprising and generous, and to share the Good News of your great love with joy. Please give us your love for people.

## Thursday, December 23

**Read:** Matthew 2:9-12

*After they had heard the king, they went on their way, and the star they had seen when it rose went ahead of them until it stopped over the place where the child was. When they saw the star, they were overjoyed. On coming to the house, they saw the child with his mother Mary, and they bowed down and worshipped him. Then they opened their treasures and presented him with gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh. And having been warned in a dream not to go back to Herod, they returned to their country by another route.*

**Reflect:** Such familiar words! Wise men from afar finally found the little family, worshipped Jesus, and presented gifts. I'd have taken diapers, blankets, and a casserole for the parents. The gifts were practical gifts, as the gold could provide as the family fled, the frankincense could repel desert insects, and the myrrh could serve as baby oil, but also gifts for a king. Gold denotes majesty – this child was born King of the Jews, and now reigns in Heaven. Incense used to worship God – this child was God come down to earth, and now is seated in Heaven. Myrrh to prepare bodies for burial – this child, both King and God, was born to die – and to rise! The men wouldn't fully understand what those gifts meant but gave them anyway. Magi, named because they dealt in magic which was never part of God's purposes for His people, and yet they and their gifts were welcomed and accepted.

This showed the world that God welcomes all, no matter age, gender, or race, no matter what we have been, have believed, or have done in the past, Jesus came for all, and wants all of us to come to Him – He will accept us.

**Pray:** Loving God, You know me and accept me, just as You knew and accepted the wise men who worshipped Jesus. May that knowledge so thrill me, that I make time to worship You daily, giving you the gifts of my love and my life – even when I don't fully understand what that may mean.

Adapted from an Advent Conspirator in the UK

## **Friday, December 24 Christmas eve**

Participate in the service as you attend church with your church family or watch at home via live stream.

**Facebook** @ FPCAmbler.

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## **Friday, December 24 Christmas eve**

**Read:** Luke 2:1-20

### **Reflect:**

Close your eyes and put yourself right into this story. Imagine you are Joseph. What are you feeling as you journey with your pregnant wife only to find the inns full? What do you feel as the baby is born and as the shepherds visit, sharing their angelic encounter? Had you doubted your own angelic visit and now have your faith restored?

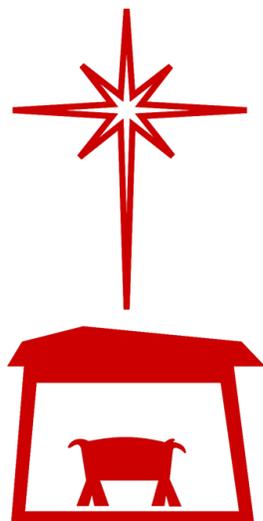
Imagine you are Mary, giving birth for the first time without the customary support. What are you thinking as you gaze into the face of your newborn? How do you respond to the shepherds?

Imagine you are one of the shepherds receiving an angel who most certainly was not a slight blonde, blue-eyed plucking a harp but rather a fierce messenger of the mighty God. The angel's first words made so much sense, "Do not be afraid." But the good news just couldn't be contained by one angel. Suddenly, a host of heavenly beings filled the sky with praise.

How does this good news touch your heart?

**Pray:** Jesus, you are a God of mystery and power. Your ways are always surprising, upending the status quo. We thank you for your humble entry into this world and repent of ways we try to build status with degrees, titles, and possessions. May we be filled anew with wonder, giving thanks for Emmanuel-God with us- living the lives you give us in humility, gratitude, obedience, and love.

**Saturday, December 25, Christmas Day**



*Joy to the world, the Lord is come.  
Let earth receive her King.  
Let every heart prepare him room.  
And heaven and nature sing.*

**Pray:** Lord God, we thank you for the indescribable gift of Jesus. May you be King of our hearts and minds and we your humble obedient servants. We join with all heaven and nature to sing your praise. Alleluia! Amen and amen.



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