

## **1st Sunday in Advent, November 28**

### **Scripture Reading: Jeremiah 33:14-16**

*"The days are surely coming, says the Lord, when I will fulfill the promise I made to the house of Israel and the house of Judah" (verse 14)*

### **FULFILLED PROMISES**

We cannot read this prophecy of "*a Righteous Branch*" without seeing Jesus. This promise of God was spoken during a dire time for Jerusalem... the promise of "*The Lord, our Righteous Savior.*"

We are in a dire time in our world today! I personally experienced a dire time in my life recently. Two years ago my husband Chris died of pancreatic cancer. Our home of 35 years was too much for me to properly care for by myself, so I sold it and moved to Victoria Gardens in 2020. The move was during COVID and the pandemic affected every area of my life: new home... feeling alone and empty... not able to mingle and establish the relationships I desperately needed and anticipated when I moved.

But you know - I wasn't alone - God was there all along - reminding me that He would never leave me or forsake me - even in the night when the darkness was the heaviest. Ironically the darkness caused me to seek God more and to look for His promises. As I spent more time in His Word and serving Him and others, peace came.

We are truly blessed to be living in this time of fulfilled promises. The hope of "*a Righteous Branch sprouting from David's line doing what is just and right in the land*" is fulfilled. Jesus is here and He is "*the Lord, our Righteous Savior.*" And we are His hands and feet in a dire world... bringing His peace.

Thanks be to God!

**Lynn Sorensen**

## **Monday, November 29**

### ***Scripture Reading: Mark 13:32-37***

***“But about that day or hour no one knows, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father. Be on guard! Be alert! You do not know when that time will come.”***(verse 32)

### **EXPECTING HIM ANY DAY**

**A**dvent is here... the time of year the Church has set aside to celebrate the coming of our Savior – His birth and, also, His Second Coming.

“*Joy to the World*” is one of my favorite songs. When I teach this song to children, I let them know that we can sing this song all year round. The first line in the song is, “Joy to the world, the Lord IS come.” When I was a child, I thought this was weird; why don’t we sing the Lord HAS come? I learned that the song is talking about the Second Coming.

We look forward to Jesus coming as the conquering warrior, and we have no idea if that will take place during the Church’s Advent Season. It could happen at any time; only the Father knows.

We should live our lives anticipating him, looking to the clouds, expecting Him at any time, on any day. Are we living our lives following His ways and doing what He has commanded us to do?

Later in the first verse of “*Joy to the World*” it says, “let every heart prepare Him room.” Is He in our hearts or have they been overrun with the expectations of the world?

Please, Lord, may I heed your warning, and, “**Beware, and keep alert.**” (verse 33)

**Devry Nix**

## ***Tuesday, November 30***

### ***Scripture Reading: Isaiah 40:1-11***

*"In the wilderness prepare the way of the Lord,  
make straight in the desert a highway for our God."* (verse 3)

### **WAIT...WAIT...WAIT**

**T**here is just a hint of light early in the morning before sunrise. I am up and out and walking as I do most days. As I approach the corner of Minnesota and Woodland Boulevard, I hear it.

A clear, crisp voice, saying, "Wait... Wait... Wait..."

It is an audible street crossing signal. It is also the message of Advent. A signal, reminding us to wait, that we have to wait. Isaiah speaks of preparing.

As a child, I remember waiting for my grandparents to arrive, for us to go cut a scrub pine tree to bring home and decorate, for the presents to start showing up under the tree, and for the Christmas Eve service with the white gifts. A lot of waiting. A lot of preparing.

There is a deeper waiting, preparing, too. Isn't there?

We err if we go too quickly to Christmas itself. There might even be a danger if we cross too soon, as at the crossing on Woodland and Minnesota.

Let's wait. How might you prepare?

What will we hear while we wait? What will we think about while we wait? What will we anticipate while we wait? What are we really waiting for? What is on the other side?

**Harland Merriam**

## **Wednesday, December 1**

### ***Reading: Lyrics to "Go Tell It on the Mountain"***

*"Go tell it on the mountain,  
Over the hills and everywhere,  
Go tell it on the mountain  
That Jesus Christ is born. "*

## **GO TELL IT ON THE MOUNTAIN**

Scripture Reference: Luke 2:8-20

In 1866, following the Civil War, Fisk University was established in Nashville, Tennessee, for the education of emancipated slaves.

In October of 1871, a choral group of students, calling themselves The Fisk Singers, was organized. They were all former slaves or children of slaves, well acquainted with the Negro spirituals and plantation songs.

"Go Tell It On The Mountain" was one of the songs this group performed though no one knows who originally penned the words. It tells of the shepherds who, in the daily grind of doing their jobs, received the announcement from the angels about the birth of the Savior.

Growing up in the church, I remember singing this hymn, "Go Tell It On The Mountain, " at Christmas. I never thought much about what it meant until years later.

In 1978 I married my husband, Shane; and eight months later we found that I had cancer. I underwent surgery at St Ann's Hospital in Columbus, Ohio, and there in my bed I accepted the Lord as my Savior. I wasn't the one who was telling that story, I was the one hearing it. I know a little of how those shepherds must have felt when they first heard the good news.

That experience changed my whole world. I started reading the Bible and remembering my childhood experiences in church and what the birth of Christ really means during Christmas.

To this day, every Christmas is like a rebirth to me as we sing this old faithful hymn.

**Ruby Gastor**

**Thursday, December 2**

**Scripture Reading: Isaiah 35:1-10**

*"A highway shall be there, and a road..."* (verse 8)

## **A PATH NAMED HOPE**

**F**or years I walked the wide broad road of the world's highway until I reached a point, during this time of the year, when I discovered that road led to a wasteland full of dust and ash. I thirsted for a drink from the water of life to quench my parched soul; I yearned for a new hope.

*"The wilderness and the wasteland shall be glad for them..."* (verse 1)

When you hit rock bottom, the only way to go is up! I looked up and accepted Jesus Christ as my Lord and Savior. I drank from the water of life and found a new hope. If you are right now at rock bottom or close to it, believe me when I say there is hope. All you have to do is ask. It's not a cliché; it is the simple, honest truth. By accepting Jesus as your Lord and Savior with sincerity of heart, your eyes will be opened. Christianity is not just a religion; it is a way of life. You will find yourself walking a new much narrower path...a path named HOPE!

**Dave Branchett**



## **Friday, December 3**

### ***Scripture Reading: Galatians 4:4-5***

*"But when the right time finally came, God sent his own Son. He came as the son of a human mother and lived under the Jewish Law, to redeem those who were under the Law, so that we might become God's children."*

### **PERFECT TIMING**

**T**his verse reminds me so much of John 3:16: *"For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life."*

This past year I participated in the Bethel Series studying the Old Testament. Mercy me! Right from the beginning God's patience was tried. It just got worse and worse...to the point that God became angry enough to consider wiping out His chosen people. But, He didn't do it. His ultimate plan unfolded in His own timing. The Rabbis and educated ones knew the Messiah was coming from reading the Torah. They envisioned the Messiah coming in grandeur, not at all as God brought Jesus into this world. No one anticipated the Savior would be the infant of a humble peasant girl who was devoted to God, heard His voice, and obeyed His command. Only a few were able to recognize the signs, their hearts opened to accept God's plan.

God's plan was, and is, and continues to unfold bit by bit... today and all our tomorrows, so that each of us can become a child of God. God loves you, me, and those who accept Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior. It's as easy as that! This season reminds us of hope, love, and promises kept.

**Diane Slaughter**

**Saturday, December 4**

*Scripture Reading: Philippians 1:3-11*

**MAY I ALWAYS “PRAY WITH JOY”**

**M**y first experience with prayer was when I was five years old and attended St. Thomas Roman Catholic Elementary School in Arbroath, Scotland. We were required to go to mass every day, and Father Donahue and Father Page prayed during the services. We students did the Rosary prayers, Apostles Creed, and the Lord’s Prayer during the service.

Unlike Apostle Paul I was never imprisoned; but when I was eight years old, I had rheumatic fever compounded by chicken pox and was hospitalized for three months. I decided to be joyful during my stay, and one day a doctor caught me jumping up and down on my hospital bed. He scolded me and told me to be still until I could be released. Another doctor brought joy by bringing colorful ribbons for my long hair. Also, a priest came to the hospital and prayed for me while I was there.

When I was ten, I had holy communion; and after that I prayed more often. My father, a Polish WW II veteran, decided he could provide a better life for his family if he emigrated to Canada. My mother had just given birth to my youngest brother, Frank. Soon after my father left, she became ill from a smallpox vaccination and was bedridden for six weeks. I had the challenge and joy of taking care of my baby brother, changing his cloth diapers, and washing them in boiling water.

I have never stopped praying; and I believe my faith, like Paul’s, was strengthened by my early experiences. I also believe my experiences have resulted in deeper relationships.

**“And this is my prayer, that your love may overflow more and more with knowledge and full insight to help you.” (verse 9)**

**Maria Jones**