



ADVENT



CHRISTMAS EVE

4:15 AND 5:30

WE WILL HAVE A FESTIVE ATMOSPHERE INCLUDING
BLANKETS, AND HOT COCOA FOR GROVE SEATING

CHRISTMAS DAY

NO SERVICE

PLEASE SPEND THE DAY CELEBRATING WITH THOSE YOU LOVE

Friends,

We pray that your experience with us at The Chapel at Seaside has shown you that it is our deepest desire that we walk with the LORD daily, and we want you to be on this journey with us. The season of Advent gives us an opportunity to turn our hearts to the things that matter most during a holy time of year that gets hijacked for over committing, overspending, over buying, over extending, over dressing, and over indulging. These things have a tendency to crowd out what the whole advent season is about. We end up on Christmas day feeling like we spent too much money, our stuff hasn't made anyone happier, we are tired and we have had no time to rest and have gained weight! When we are left feeling this way, it's a tell that we have wasted all the goodness that comes with this season.

What if we spent the next month walking with Jesus, drawing closer to the things our King stands for; hope, peace, joy, and love. What if we felt more thankfulness when we gathered with our friends and our conversations were more life giving than draining. What if when it came time to open up our house to guests we were able to feel secure in who we are and what our home looks like because we have addressed the fact that our identity is in our creator and Savior. What if hospitality feels a little easier and like an act of care and compassion and causes true delight instead of something that is wearing us out or stretching us too thin? What if when the family gathered we were so in tune with the Spirit of God that we actually knew when to keep our mouth shut, while simultaneously knowing who needs a word of encouragement. What if you were made aware, by the Spirit, that you needed to take someone aside to pray with them. All of this is possible in the advent season. Doesn't this sound like a treat? It almost sounds like life more abundant. As we walk with Jesus, we become like Him. We can become a non-anxious presence. Can you imagine an entire community who finds themselves all over the world being a non-anxious Christ filled presence to the people we encounter?! GAME CHANGER, world changer.

What do you believe the Lord can do in and through your life in a month of thoughtful expectation?

Are you excited? We are.

Hope, Peace, Joy, and Love,
Andrew & Sarah Beard

WHAT IS ADVENT?

Advent means something is coming - something worth waiting for, something important.

For us advent is a season to remember what God has already done through Jesus while at the same time looking forward with expectation to the coming of the Kingdom of God. This is cause for celebration. Advent isn't a season we honor because we have to, it is a season we honor because we get to.

ADVENT HOW TO:

This Advent reading is designed for you to read Monday-Friday the four weeks leading up to Christmas. We hope you read this and discuss it with your friends and family. It is appropriate to read with children as well.

With that said, welcome to the season of Advent. Grab a Bible, make it front and center of all the decorations to guide your heart, and to have on hand.

WHAT YOU MAY WANT TO HAVE ON HAND:

- Bible
- pen
- Download our playlist ([link on opposite page](#))
- a puzzle.
- a game

SOUNDS OF THE SEASON

Is there anything more cozy than a lit up tree, a fire, a cup of something warm and some Christmas music? The songs we sing every year are filled with the story of our Savior. Maybe we have sung them so often that we forget the meaning, or don't pay enough attention to what we are actually singing. Recall with us the lyrics of some of our favorite songs that keep in the front of our mind the very HOLY reason we celebrate. Find our playlist on
Apple Music - The Chapel at Seaside Advent





PSALM 130-

OUT OF THE DEPTHS I CRY TO YOU, O LORD!

O LORD, HEAR MY VOICE!

LET YOUR EARS BE ATTENTIVE

TO THE VOICE OF MY PLEAS FOR MERCY!

IF YOU, O LORD, SHOULD MARK INIQUITIES,

O LORD, WHO COULD STAND?

BUT WITH YOU THERE IS FORGIVENESS,

THAT YOU MAY BE FEARED.

I WAIT FOR THE LORD, MY SOUL WAITS,

AND IN HIS WORD I HOPE;

MY SOUL WAITS FOR THE LORD

MORE THAN WATCHMEN FOR THE MORNING,

MORE THAN WATCHMEN FOR THE MORNING.

O ISRAEL, HOPE IN THE LORD!

FOR WITH THE LORD THERE IS STEADFAST LOVE,

AND WITH HIM IS PLENTIFUL REDEMPTION.

AND HE WILL REDEEM ISRAEL

FROM ALL HIS INIQUITIES.

קוֹוָה

QAVAH
(KAW-VAW')

To wait
tension and expectation
while you wait.

ISAIAH 8:11-17

This week we remember **hope**. We are looking at our need for **hope**. We **hope** in things all the time. We **hope** our team wins the game, we **hope** our car makes it another year, we **hope** the test results are good, we **hope** that our life is filled with meaning and purpose. This time of year we **hope** we buy the right presents, we **hope** we get the right presents, and we **hope** we don't get stuck doing the dishes after the Christmas party. **Hope** in Hebrew is represented by several different words. One of the words is qavah. This beautiful word is based on the word "cord" or "rope that is pulled tight". It has a sense of expectation and can also be translated as waiting in addition to **hope**. It's like potential energy when a bow is pulled tight. Great things are to come, but are not yet realized. The Prophet Isaiah shared a word from the LORD when destruction and invasion were coming. The world looked dark and difficult and it was only getting worse. The truth calls for them to not go by the ways of the world. Those paths will lead to conspiracy, fear, and dread. When tension is high, when fear is mounting, we should turn to the LORD for **hope**. The section ends with saying, "I will wait (the same word for **hope**) for the LORD... and I will **hope** (same word as wait) in Him." When we wait upon the LORD in the midst of dark and difficult situations, we have **hope** that will sustain us.

What are you **hoping** for in this season? Where do you see **hope** on the horizon? How can you put your **hope** in Jesus today?

Write down a list of fears or concerns you have. Then write down the **hope** you have for each of those things or situations. Turn to the LORD for **hope** and consistently lift those concerns to Him, waiting with **hope**.





JEREMIAH 29:4-14

Have you ever been in a place or season that you just didn't want to be? I remember when I was in college reading over the syllabus at the beginning of each semester and thinking, "I don't want to do this. I don't want to be here." Now, I chose to go to college, but there are plenty of times we look at situations or circumstances and we can easily become paralyzed by how difficult it will be. We have a tendency in those moments to believe anything, any story, any lie, any deception or reframing that makes it seem like "all is good". People would say, I know the syllabus looks tough, but it's not hard, it'll be over soon.

In Jeremiah, we see the people of God taken into captivity in Babylon. They were subdivided and called to assimilate into the dominant culture. When this happens, a prophet named Hannahiah said, "Good news, we're only going to be here for a few years." God spoke to Jeremiah and called for him to tell the truth. It wouldn't be just a few years, it would be a few generations. They were called to build houses, plant gardens, and invest in the community they were in...even if it wasn't where they wanted to be. The people in captivity waited patiently, they had "tikvah"...another word for both waiting and hope while they were in this circumstance they didn't desire. Waiting and hoping are linked. One can only endure waiting because of **hope**. **Hopeful** people recognize there is not necessarily evidence that things will get better, but you choose **hope** anyway.

What do you feel like it looks like to choose **hope** when things are hard?

MATTHEW 12:15-21

As Christmas approaches each year, I have this overwhelming feeling; I need to shop. I need to go shopping so that there are gifts to give, but it always exists in a future tense. I need to shop...at some point.

It's only counted as shopping when it moves from a future idea that gives me anxiety, to a present activity where I find myself in the aisles at Target. I am shopping. Too often it seems like we kick things or ideas or even hopes and fears down the road for some future version to deal with. Instead of tackling whatever is filling our mind, we think

"I'll deal with that later." It actually takes up more mental and emotional space because it hasn't been addressed or solved. What if we moved from being passive people to active people?

What if we moved from aimless theoretical hope,
to pragmatic, intentional hope?

When the moment from today's reading takes place in the story of Jesus, he has been upsetting people left and right, because he was healing people and teaching about life and rest found in him; God, made flesh. It turns out, people get nervous about Jesus. To make matters worse, he would pull away from the crowds and, of course, people followed him! Since the people were there, Jesus went ahead and healed them all. Matthew then connects the dots for us, the readers, referencing the Prophet Isaiah. This is a prophecy that Isaiah had made about a future messiah who would proclaim justice to the outsiders, who would care for those things that seem useless, like a bruised reed and a wick that is out. The very people Jesus called to, the very people Jesus invested in, the very people that Jesus was bringing justice to were those seemingly worthless outsiders.

That may seem offensive until we realize we are included in the category of seemingly worthless outsiders.

Jesus was bringing hope and in his name we have hope.

In the Greek, the word for hope is *elpis*. It is also translated as trust or expectation. Here, the word is not the noun *elpis*, but the *verb* *elpizō*. We have active hope not in a circumstance, but in a person; Jesus. Today remember that hope isn't passive, but active. We don't just to have hope, we are living in action of hope. Hope isn't made complete in a circumstance, but in the one who fulfilled what was prophesied and brought life and healing to you and me.

Situations will fail and fall apart.

People will fail and fall short.

For the people we read about, a servant was coming that would bring justice to victory. For us, we know him. His name is Jesus and we hope in him because he will not fail or fall short.

He is our living hope here and now.

1 PETER 1:3-9

As a kid, I always wanted it to snow on Christmas. I think over the course of my life there has only been snow on Christmas just a few times. But the one that is most memorable was back in 2009. We lived in Kansas City and as people were gathering for Christmas Eve services, rain turned to ice and sleet, and sleet turned to snow. The entire city shut down because through the night 8 or more inches of snow fell across the city. On Christmas eve there was nothing and the next morning the entire city was transformed into a winter wonderland.

We oftentimes wait **hoping** for something that isn't seen yet to suddenly appear. This is faith. This is believing that something will arrive, something will happen, something will show up...even if it isn't seen or doesn't seem likely or even possible. It isn't ignorance or wishful thinking, it is belief that the impossible can happen. Our faith is based on this idea.

The people of God were desperate for **hope** to arrive in the long awaited messiah. Then, after 400 years of silence, he was born.

Hope arrived in creation with the sound of the cries of a baby.

As he walked upon the earth bringing life to those he met, he transformed the world around him. He was **hope**.

Maybe not the **hope** they expected or anticipated, but the **hope** that they desperately needed.

Through Jesus' life, death, and resurrection, redemption covered creation and because of it, transformation is happening here and now.

Like a child who sits at the window **hoping** for snow, filled with excitement and expectation, **hope** is in the distance.

We know **hope** has come for you and for me, redeeming creation. It is no longer in the distance, **hope** is here, **hope** has a name, **hope** is Jesus.

Biblical **hope** is not optimism, it is the expectation of fulfillment through the person of Jesus.



Oh Come, oh Come, Emmanuel is one of my favorite Christmas songs. The tune is somber and every time I hear it, I stop. This song is not filled with memories of snowflakes and sipping hot cocoa by the fire, but it is a song of **hope**.

Every verse ends with the line, "Emmanuel shall come to thee, O Israel!" This song is a song of **hope** in the waiting. It is the definition of all we have reflected about this week. It represents the story of the Israelites as they wait; through mourning, through darkness, and through the completion of the work of the Kingdom Come. We rejoice with the echoes of **hope**. When you listen to this song, pay attention to the swell of the sounds when we sing the refrain,

“REJOICE! REJOICE!

EMMANUEL SHALL COME TO THEE,

O ISRAEL!”

We know he will. We have **hope**.

O Come, O Come, Emmanuel.

BENISON. 8, 8, 8, 8, 8, 8.

JOHN HULLAH.

1. O come, O come, Em-man-u-el, And ran-som cap-tive Is-ra-el,

That mourns in lone-ly ex-ile here, Un-til the Son of God ap-pear.

Rejoice! rejoice! Em-man-u-el Shall come to thee, O Is-ra-el! A-men.

2 O come, Thou Rod of Jesse, free
Thine own from Satan's tyranny;
From depths of hell Thy people save
And give them victory o'er the grave.
Rejoice! rejoice! Emmanuel
Shall come to thee, O Israel!

3 O come, Thou Day-Spring, come and cheer
Our spirits by Thine Advent here:
And drive away the shades of night,
And pierce the clouds, and bring us light!
Rejoice! rejoice! Emmanuel!
Shall come to thee, O Israel!

4 O come, Thou Key of David, come,
And open wide, our heavenly home:
Make safe the way that leads on high,
And close the path to misery.
Rejoice! rejoice! Emmanuel
Shall come to thee, O Israel!

*From "Greater Antiphons," ab. 12th Century.
Tr. John Mason Neale, 1851.*



ISAIAH 9:6-7.

FOR TO US A CHILD IS BORN,
TO US A SON IS GIVEN;
AND THE GOVERNMENT SHALL BE UPON HIS SHOULDER,
AND HIS NAME SHALL BE CALLED
WONDERFUL COUNSELOR, MIGHTY GOD,
EVERLASTING FATHER, PRINCE OF PEACE.
OF THE INCREASE OF HIS GOVERNMENT AND OF PEACE
THERE WILL BE NO END,
ON THE THRONE OF DAVID AND OVER HIS KINGDOM,
TO ESTABLISH IT AND TO UPHOLD IT
WITH JUSTICE AND WITH RIGHTEOUSNESS
FROM THIS TIME FORTH AND FOREVERMORE.
THE ZEAL OF THE LORD OF HOSTS WILL DO THIS.

שָׁלוֹם

SHALOM

(SHAW-LOME')

complete, peace, whole,
lacking in nothing

PHILIPPIANS 4:4-7

“BECAUSE OUR BRAIN RESOURCES ARE LIMITED, WHAT YOU ATTEND TO FIRST BECOMES YOUR REALITY.”

Shawn Achor - Happiness Advantage

Somewhere in the early 90's I got a game boy for Christmas. It had 2 games; Mario Brothers and Tetris. Do you know the Game tetris? I spent so much time playing this game on road trips. I felt like I became an expert organizer in real life. “If I can just move this over, then this other thing will fit!” Well, there is an actual thing called the “tetris effect.” When someone spends enough time doing a specific activity, it actually patterns their thoughts, the way they see the world and their actual dreams. It is named after tetris...google it, it's super interesting. The point is, what we are feeding our minds completely affects how we think, function, see the world, and even dream. Paul directs us in the way of **peace**. And not just any kind of **peace**. A **peace** we cannot even begin to understand or make sense of.

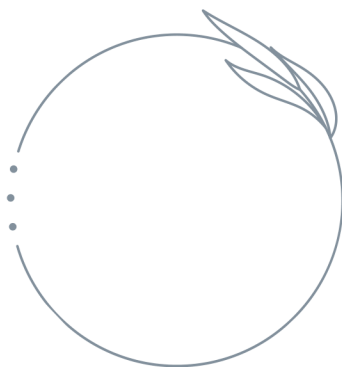
Read today's scripture.
Check out the order here.

- Praise the Lord.
- Live with reasoning and open hands. This is a gentleness that others can see and know.
- The Lord is with you - God hears you.
- Instead of worrying, offer thanks to God because you trust that God is in control.

And then...

- The **peace** of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

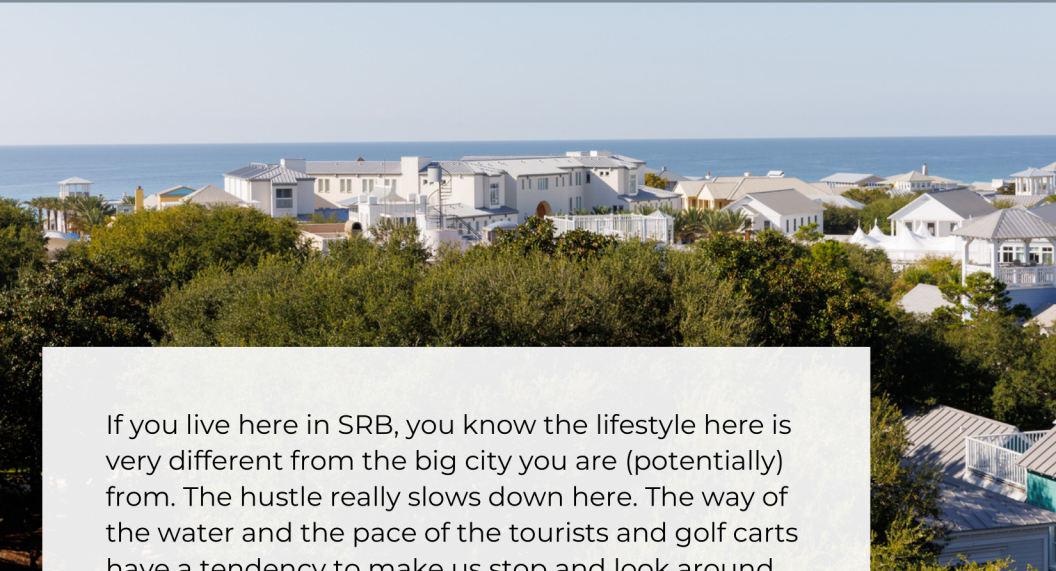
Our hearts and minds are shielded in **peace**. I take a deep sigh of relief at the thought of that, don't you?



Biblical **peace** is not just the absence of conflict. **Peace** is the presence of something better in its place.

Shalom means complete or whole. Imagine a puzzle with all of its pieces laying on a table spread out all over the surface. Then imagine it complete, put together, all in perfect order, making up a greater picture and story. This is **shalom**. It isn't the absence of the puzzle. It's the whole of it.

This week, consider buying a puzzle to set out this season and put together with friends or family. As you make conversation over the pieces, consider the truth that in this world, we are working toward **shalom**. When you finish your puzzle, stand back and revel in the fact that it was not quick, but it is beautiful. It is an example of **shalom**.



If you live here in SRB, you know the lifestyle here is very different from the big city you are (potentially) from. The hustle really slows down here. The way of the water and the pace of the tourists and golf carts have a tendency to make us stop and look around. But we are still living our lives. If it happens to be the case that we are not rushing around to do so much, we then find ourselves feeling guilty that we aren't doing enough. I believe we are looking for worth and personal value to lead us to a place of **peace**. I can guarantee that **peace** is not found in the completion of anything you produce, or any grade you get, or any dollar amount you managed to make this year. The truth is that Jesus did all the heavy lifting to make **peace** and to be our **peace**.

THEREFORE, SINCE WE HAVE BEEN JUSTIFIED BY FAITH, WE HAVE **PEACE WITH GOD THROUGH OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST. ROMANS 5:1**

HE HIMSELF IS OUR **PEACE. EPHESIANS 2:14-15**

What if this holiday season you took the opportunity to stop once a week for a micro sabbath. This is a time to rest in the fact that you don't have to produce anything to earn God's love and can actually rest in his perfect peace. Remember, you aren't earning **peace**, you are receiving it.



MICRO SABBATH HOW TO.

STEP ONE. CHOOSE A WINDOW OF TIME (1-24 HOURS) AND PLAN IT.

STEP TWO. BEGIN

Light a candle to start.
Express gratitude to God.

A PSALM FOR REFLECTION:

“Search me, God and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts. See if there is any offensive way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.”

STEP THREE. FILL YOUR TIME WITH 1-3 OF THESE THINGS.

- Blessing the children
- Eating a Sabbath meal
- Singing
- Worshiping with your church
- Walking
- Napping
- Delighting in your spouse
- Reading, especially Scripture
- Spending time alone with God
- Spending time with family and friends in conversation and celebration

RECEIVE THIS BLESSING.

“May the God of rest fill you with his **peace** and presence as you rest in him.”



It came upon the midnight clear.

Carol 195.

(CHRISTMAS.)

J. R. Higinbotham.

1. It came up - on the mid - night clear, That glo - rious song of old,
2. Still through the clo - ven skies they come, With peace - ful wings un - fur'd,

From an - gels bend - ing near the earth To touch their harps of gold;
And still their heav'n - ly mu - sic floats, O'er all the wea - ry world;

Peace on the earth, good will to men, From Heav'n's all - gra - cious King, . .
A - bove its sad and low - ly plains, They bend on hov'ring wing, . .

The world in sol - emn still - ness lay, To hear the an - gels sing, .
And ev - er o'er its Ba - bel sounds The bless - ed an - gels sing, .

3

O ye beneath life's crushing load,
Whose forms are bending low,
Who toil along the climbing way
With painful steps and slow!
Look now, for glad and golden hours
Come swiftly on the wing;
O rest beside the weary road
And hear the angels sing.

4

For lo! the days are hastening on,
By prophets seen of old,
When with the ever-circling years
Shall come the time foretold,
When the new heaven and earth shall own,
The Prince of Peace, their King,
And the whole world send back the song
Which now the angels sing.

• Small notes for organ only.
Parish Choir, No. 595—4.

It Came upon the Midnight Clear says so many things about peace. It claims that Angels declare it, it calls for unity so that we live in it. It describes our long suffering for it, and it celebrates the truth that it is coming in fullness.

The **peace** of God is available now. As you listen to this Christmas Hymn today, think about 2 things.

1. Do I trust God with my worry and heavy burdens?
2. Am I doing all I can to make **peace** in the world around me?

“**PEACE I LEAVE WITH YOU; MY PEACE I
GIVE TO YOU. NOT AS THE WORLD GIVES
DO I GIVE TO YOU. LET NOT YOUR HEARTS
BE TROUBLED, NEITHER BE AFRAID.**” -

JOHN 14:27





PHILIPPIANS 4:8-9

When things feel out of order, our **shalom** breaks down and we need it to be restored, or made complete. We surely cannot live into the call of being **peacemakers** if we never receive the **peace** God has for us in the first place.

So how do we get it?

READ TODAY'S SCRIPTURE

We are given a list of things that we should be thinking about...and when we practice these things it says the God of **peace** will be with you. (this scripture directly follows the one where he gives us peace that passes understanding). We dare you to try.

What things do you need to start thinking about today?
Shalom.





PSALM 16

PRESERVE ME, O GOD, FOR IN YOU I TAKE REFUGE.

I SAY TO THE LORD, "YOU ARE MY LORD;

I HAVE NO GOOD APART FROM YOU."

AS FOR THE SAINTS IN THE LAND, THEY ARE THE EXCELLENT ONES,

IN WHOM IS ALL MY DELIGHT.

THE SORROWS OF THOSE WHO RUN AFTER ANOTHER GOD SHALL MULTIPLY;

THEIR DRINK OFFERINGS OF BLOOD I WILL NOT POUR OUT

OR TAKE THEIR NAMES ON MY LIPS.

THE LORD IS MY CHOSEN PORTION AND MY CUP;

YOU HOLD MY LOT.

THE LINES HAVE FALLEN FOR ME IN PLEASANT PLACES;

INDEED, I HAVE A BEAUTIFUL INHERITANCE.

I BLESS THE LORD WHO GIVES ME COUNSEL;

IN THE NIGHT ALSO MY HEART INSTRUCTS ME.

I HAVE SET THE LORD ALWAYS BEFORE ME;

BECAUSE HE IS AT MY RIGHT HAND, I SHALL NOT BE SHAKEN.

THEREFORE MY HEART IS GLAD, AND MY WHOLE BEING REJOICES;

MY FLESH ALSO DWELLS SECURE.

FOR YOU WILL NOT ABANDON MY SOUL TO SHEOL,

OR LET YOUR HOLY ONE SEE CORRUPTION.

YOU MAKE KNOWN TO ME THE PATH OF LIFE;

IN YOUR PRESENCE THERE IS FULLNESS OF JOY;

AT YOUR RIGHT HAND ARE PLEASURES FOREVERMORE.

חֲדָה

ḤADAH
(KHAW-DAW')

joy, rejoice

PSALM 104:14-34

Have you ever seen a child play in the snow? It is freezing outside, they are underdressed and likely to experience hypothermia or they are over dressed and can barely move. Oftentimes, a child can look past whatever situation they are in and can experience joy and delight in that moment. The external circumstances (that are not ideal) bear little to no weight on the delight in the moment.

Do you ever think about how God delights in us and longs for us to delight as well? Notice in the Psalm, God causes goodness from the earth to gladden the heart of man (vs.15)! In Vs. 26 this scripture tells that the leviathan (beast of the ocean) was created to play in the water. And in vs. 31 we see the Lord rejoice over his work.

Over and over again God tells his people to stop and celebrate. One of the ways to avoid sin and temptation is to be grateful and happy with what and who we have been given by God. Sometimes this is easier said than done. The reality is, we so often hurry through life taking on a posture of bitterness and complaining that we begin to have a hard time finding things in which to rejoice.

If we are delighting in the everyday kindness of God, we are less seduced by the things that we think may bring us “pleasure” that would lead us to sin. (Galatians 5:16) Delight is rooted in finding joy through God’s goodness in our lives.

What are parts of your everyday life in which you find delight? Think about these things and identify some things that cause you joy through God’s gifts.



Here are some ideas to get your mind working:
Sitting with your Bible in the morning with a hot cup of coffee or tea, a conversation with a dear friend, hugging your kid or a family member, meeting your neighbor in the street to catch up, enjoying an evening fire in your fire pit, sitting down to share a delicious meal, a beautiful sunset, a walk on the beach, a ride down 30A, a glass of wine or kombucha.

Even if we are facing a trial (which many of us are), we still have the opportunity to rejoice and delight in things that we take for granted. Pause now and make a decision to delight in something that brings you joy every day from now until Christmas. Delight with this in mind - it is not the object, it is the giver of the gift in which we are **rejoicing** and growing.

As you engage in something that brings you joy, begin with the liturgy, "Blessed are you Lord, for giving me this_____ in which I get to delight as a taste of your goodness. I am choosing joy in this moment."

1 CORINTHIANS 12:25-27

I am always cold. I lived in the midwest for the first half of my life and the winters in MO can be brutal. I remember one year when it stayed below zero degrees for an entire week. When Christmas came around I received a super fluffy king sized blanket. This was the ultimate gift given by Andrew. To this day, 14 years later, it is my favorite gift, and I would venture to guess it is one of his favorite gifts he has given me because of how often he has gotten to watch this blanket bring others joy and comfort. The moment still happens most mornings when one of our children (who did not exist when the gift was originally given) grabs the blanket out of a basket and wraps himself in it like he is a bird in a nest. Andrew and I are now experiencing joy from watching others experiencing joy.

God views us like this gift giver and God delights in us. God loves when we find Joy in him. And I believe that God also delights in us when our joy in Him spreads to others.

Who is someone that brings you joy? Really think about this.

This advent season we want you to consider getting together with people who you delight in so you can spread joy back to them. Think of the person that when you end your time together you feel filled up.

TUESDAY

We have relationships here in Santa Rosa Beach, and we have these people across the US. If your people don't live near you, plan a zoom date night. If they live near you we want you to take the step farther than meeting out at a restaurant or park, we want to encourage you to meet in your home. Allow people into your space to sit together, linger over food and dessert and wine and learn about each other, laugh, and be filled with delight.

Celebrate, delight, and find joy in community. If this stresses you out, think of gathering together in a “biblical way”, not in an “entertaining to impress people” way. Feel freedom in ordering out or go with an old fashioned pot luck and let go of your cares to be perfect...just be present.

Remember Jesus played host to all kinds of people around the table and he didn't even have a home.

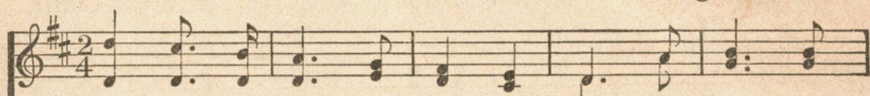
Make a plan today to get it on the calendar. You need this.

Joy to the World!

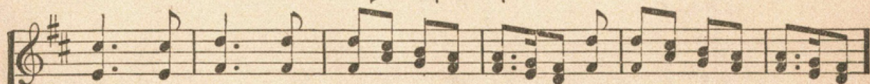
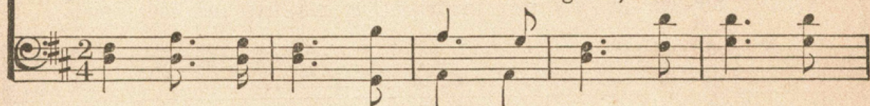
Isaac Watts.

Antioch. C. M.

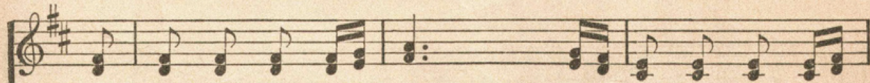
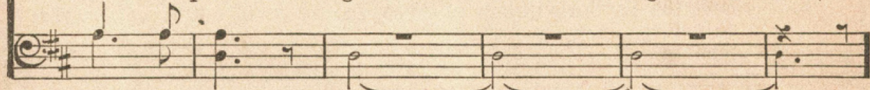
George F. Handel.



1. Joy to the world! the Lord is come; Let earth re-
 2. Joy to the earth! the Sav - ior reigns; Let men their
 3. No more let sins and sor - rows grow, Nor thorns in-
 4. He rules the world with truth and grace, And makes the



ceive her King; Let ev - 'ry heart pre - pare Him room,
 songs em - ploy; While fields and floods, rocks, hills and plains
 fest the ground; He comes to make His bless - ings flow
 na - tions prove The glo - ries of His right - eous - ness,



And Heav'n and na - ture sing, And Heav'n and na - ture
 Re - peat the sound - ing joy, Re - peat the sound - ing
 Far as the curse is found, Far as the curse is
 And won - ders of His love, And won - ders of His
 And Heav'n and na - ture sing, And



sing, And Heav'n, and Heav'n and na - ture sing.
 joy, Re - peat, re - peat the sound - ing joy.
 found, Far as, far as the curse is found.
 love, And won - ders, and won - ders of His love. A - MEN.
 Heav'n and na - ture sing,





We sing this beloved hymn every Christmas. It has one resounding theme- Joy. This song tells us the story of the Gospel. Joy to the World, Joy to the Earth. The ruler of all is with us. When you hear this song on a playlist or a movie or commercial, or while you are in a store or when we sing it together in worship, consider the amazing news being proclaimed and that this joy is for EVERYONE. The song is reminding us that we are supposed to prepare room for Jesus in our hearts. Next time you hear it, take heart, for this season and this song reminds us that Jesus' birth was and will forever be good news of great joy, which is for all people.

Listen to this song today and sing it out loud.



NEHEMIAH 8:9-11

This scripture needs context, so here is condensed history. The temple had been destroyed and Nehemiah was led by God to rebuild it so the Lord could dwell there and so the people would be able to inhabit their home and the Lord would be glorified. Once the walls were finished and the Israelites were home, they gathered together and asked Ezra the scribe to read from the Book of the Law of Moses that the Lord had commanded Israel. It seems this was an act of reinstating themselves as the people of God in their rebuilt city.

This is where we find today's scripture.

THURSDAY

Ezra did the reading. As Ezra read the law it struck the Israelites just how wrong they were living. The law was useful for them to be able to see where they were living against the desires of the Lord and their response was to weep. Have you ever been broken by your sin? Have you ever had the realization you had fallen short? You think that things will not ever be right between you and the Lord again...well, that is how the Hebrew people felt. But hear what the leader said.

Nehemiah said, "Go and **enjoy** choice food and sweet drinks, and send some to those who have nothing prepared. This day is holy to our Lord. Do not grieve, for the **joy** of the Lord is your strength."

He said, celebrate together, the **JOY OF THE LORD** is YOUR STRENGTH. This is not a message of condemnation for recognized sin. This is a **joyful** response to repentant hearts. When we come to the Lord and say we are sorry and admit our wrong, his grace meets us with joy and causes us to be able to stand strong in our position of walking with the Lord. His **JOY** in us, affords us celebration and strength. What a gracious and wonderful God we serve.

God is a God of **Joy**, we hear it from the mouth of Jesus in John 15:9-11

"As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Now remain in my love. If you keep my commands, you will remain in my love, just as I have kept my Father's commands and remain in his love. I have told you this so that my **joy** may be in you and that your **joy** may be complete."

He is saying the same thing Nehemiah told them. Remain in my love, Keep my commands - my **joy** will be in you and your **joy** will be complete. Your **joy** cannot get any more full than when you are abiding in the vine.

Are there ways in which you are living that are not in alignment with how the Lord would have you to live? These things are keeping you from fullness of **joy**.

The time is now for you to repent and experience the **joy** of the Lord. Think about where you were headed in the wrong direction, turn back to the Lord, find your strength in God, and **rejoice**. For Nehemiah, when they realized they were out of sync with God, they did not sit in their sorrow and grieve, but turned back and celebrated. Find something you **enjoy** or delight in, give thanks for it, and remember that all good things come from above. **Enjoy** what you have giving thanks and praise to the one who welcomes you home.



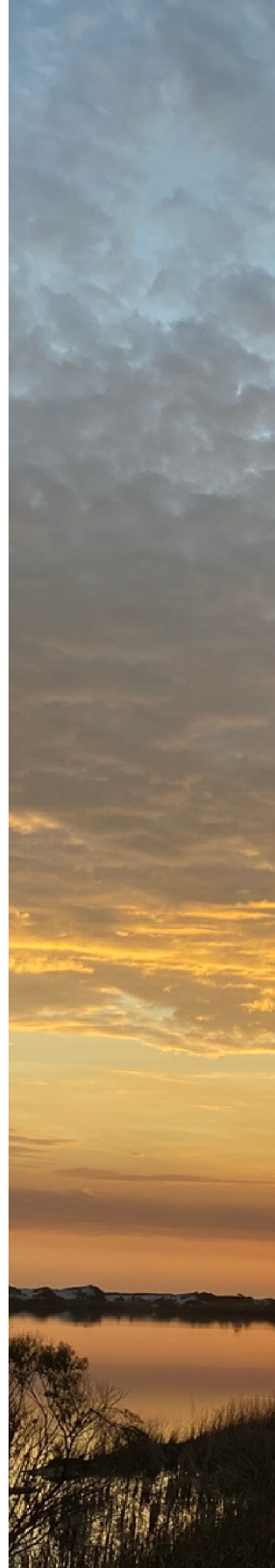
PSALM 16

Leading up to the Advent season I have been made aware of so much struggle and hurt in our church family. Even as I write this my family is facing sickness after sickness and what feels like spiritual attack one right after the other. So here I sit writing about **joy**. Psalm 16 is our theme scripture for the week. When I read it, the thing that stands out to me the most is the faith of the Psalmist. It says, "in your presence is the fullness of **joy**." When a cup is full of water, you can't add more water without it overflowing. The **joy** we get from walking with the Lord, putting God's ways first and walking with him, literally fills our cup of **joy** all the way up. When we face trials it is easy to despair, and it is okay to lament and cry out, absolutely. But we must trust the Lord to be our fullness. Have you met a very sick person who also seems to be overwhelmingly **joyful**? This is the sign of a person who knows that all good comes from God and who finds the fullness of **joy** in His presence.

Reread Psalm 16. If you need to, pray it outloud from your perspective.

As we sit with the Lord, in His presence, we become more glad and filled up by him alone. We become more **joyful**. We know this is true because **joy** is a fruit of the Spirit. **Joy** develops in us as we draw closer and closer to the Lord.

Are you more **joyful** than you were last year? If so, what has changed in your life this year? If not, consider where you are seeking to find **joy**.







PRAISE THE LORD, ALL NATIONS!

EXTOL HIM, ALL PEOPLES!

FOR GREAT IS HIS STEADFAST LOVE TOWARD US,
AND THE FAITHFULNESS OF THE LORD ENDURES
FOREVER.

PRAISE THE LORD!

OH GIVE THANKS TO THE LORD,
FOR HE IS GOOD;
FOR HIS STEADFAST LOVE ENDURES FOREVER!

LET ISRAEL SAY,

“HIS STEADFAST LOVE ENDURES FOREVER.”

LET THE HOUSE OF AARON SAY,

“HIS STEADFAST LOVE ENDURES FOREVER.”

LET THOSE WHO FEAR THE LORD SAY,

“HIS STEADFAST LOVE ENDURES FOREVER.”

אהב

ÀHAVAH
(AH-HAV)

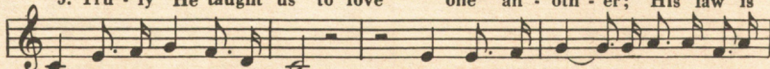
love,
to have or show
affection or care

Holy Night

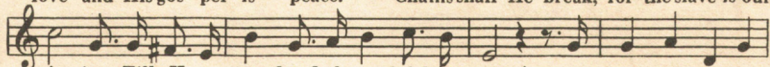
ANDANTE MAESTOSO



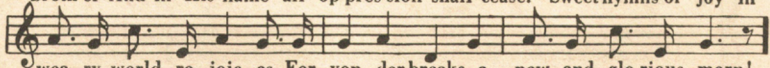
1. O ho - ly night! the stars are bright - ly shin - ing, It is the
2. Led by the light of Faith se - rene - ly beam - ing, With glow - ing
3. Tru - ly He taught us to love one an - oth - er; His law is



night of the dear Sav - iour's birth! Long lay the world in sin and er - ror
 hearts by His cra - dle we stand. So led by light of a star sweet - ly
 love and His gos - pel is peace. Chains shall He break, for the slave is our



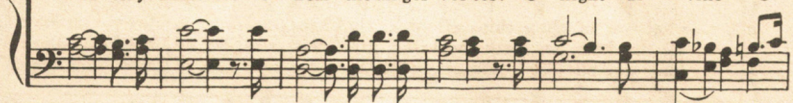
pin - ing, Till He ap - peared and the soul felt its worth. A thrill of hope the
 gleam - ing, Here came the wisemen from the O - rient land. The King of Kings lay
 broth - er And in His name all op - pres - sion shall cease. Sweet hymns of joy in



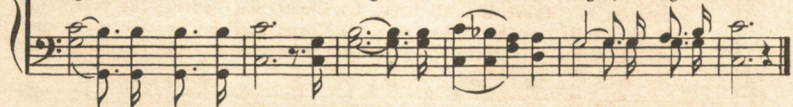
wea - ry world re - joic - es, For yon - der breaks a new and glo - rious morn!
 thus in low - ly mang - er, In all our tri - als born to be our friend!
 grate - ful chor - us raise we, Let all with - in us praise His ho - ly name!



Fall on your knees! O hear the an - gel voi - ces! O night di - vine O



night when Christ was born. O night di - vine! O night, O night di - vine!



The young French composer, Adolphe Adam, aspired to fame a century ago as a writer of grand opera, it is as the author of this beautiful hymn that succeeding generations have come to remember him.



“His law is love”...how many times have you sang this line and not fully thought about what it means? The entire 3rd verse of this song is a surrender to love people on the baseline of equality and unity.

Romans 13:8-10 says

OWE NO ONE ANYTHING, EXCEPT TO LOVE EACH OTHER, FOR THE ONE WHO LOVES ANOTHER HAS FULFILLED THE LAW. FOR THE COMMANDMENTS, “YOU SHALL NOT COMMIT ADULTERY, YOU SHALL NOT MURDER, YOU SHALL NOT STEAL, YOU SHALL NOT COVET,” AND ANY OTHER COMMANDMENT, ARE SUMMED UP IN THIS WORD: “YOU SHALL LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR AS YOURSELF.” LOVE DOES NO WRONG TO A NEIGHBOR; THEREFORE LOVE IS THE FULFILLING OF THE LAW.

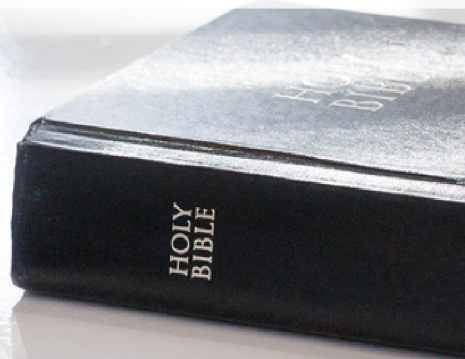
The Law of the Lord exists for us to honor God and honor others with our lives. When we operate out of a position of love, “it does no wrong” you cannot honestly and with the love of God, love someone into sin. Therefore, love is the fulfillment of the law.

His law is love and his Gospel (good news) is peace.

LUKE 6:35

The classic Christmas story that is told over and over again is about a mean selfish Ebenezer Scrooge. He makes enemies with everyone and finds that he is plagued by his own hate. It is only after a dark and difficult night does he wake up to the realization that hate will destroy him. When we come alive in Christ, the same thing happens to us. Left to our own ways, we often make enemies with almost anyone; our boss, our employees, the person at the store who cuts in line, the cashier who is snippy, the politician who thinks differently than us, our in-laws, or that person we went to high school with who spouts crazy ideas online. We can become plagued by our frustration, anger, and hate towards those people.

But with Jesus, **love** should be our way. This kind of **love** imitates the character of God. He moved towards people who were hurting who could not benefit him.



This means **love** for our **loved** ones, **love** for our neighbor, and **love** for our enemy. **Love** for the person who cuts you in line, **love** for the snippy cashier, **love** for the politician. **Love** for anyone and everyone. This is the challenge we should all lean into, **LOVING EVERYONE**. **Love** because Christ first **loved** us. **Love** because we are called to be like him. **Love** because those family members, those neighbors, those enemies, are also created in the image of God.

This Christmas, see the world the way Scrooge did at the end of the story. Be a person who is changed, a person who **loves**, a person who is generous without expecting anything in return.

For a challenge, list some people who are difficult to **love**. And pray for them. Pray that your heart is softened towards them. Pray that you can **love** them like Christ **loves** you. To push yourself even one step further, find ways to bless those people...and expect nothing in return.





ROMANS 5:8

1 JOHN 4:9-11

As we approach Christmas, a lot of us have to decide who we are going to send our Christmas card to. What is the line of relationship or interaction that qualifies someone to get a card from me at Christmas?

We create all sorts of lists or rules about who gets to be blessed by our card to and who is getting the cut this year! This is an interesting process to think through, because we are putting value or worth on people based off of our interaction from the last year. We are asking, “who is worth my time, money and attention...and who isn’t?” Now, obviously we all have limited resources and we can’t send cards to every human we know, though I think Christmas is a magnifying glass to how we think and operate in the world the other 364 days.

The example that Christ gives is one that is hard to follow. While people hated him, while they were corrupt and seemingly unlovable, he chose to die for them.

If someone was offensive to me this year (accidentally or on purpose), I won’t be sending them a Christmas card...and I certainly wouldn’t die for them.

If someone cuts me off in traffic, I won’t even let them change lanes down the road...and I certainly wouldn’t die for them.

If someone is rude to me at a store, I won't even hold the door for them on the way out...and I certainly wouldn't die for them.
If someone wears a brand or logo that is offensive, I won't engage with them...and I certainly wouldn't die for them.

See we are called to **love** others; the corrupt, selfish enemies...because Christ **loves** us, the corrupt selfish enemies.

This Christmas, remember that this is how we know what **love** is, Jesus Christ laid down his life for us, therefore we ought to lay down our lives for one another.

We need to trust that at the center of the universe is a being who is overflowing with **love**. We receive it and send it out to others.

Challenge yourself to be overwhelming with **love** and generosity towards others. Pray that God reveals the areas of your life where you are not loving, and ask to be changed.

Then, prayerfully assess the ways you are making it difficult for people to **love** you. From cutting people off in traffic, for being rude or dismissive to others, for offensive or unloving things you say, do, or promote. And make changes. We are not saved by our actions, but by faith. And as we follow after Jesus, **love** that has come and walked among us, we take steps to be changed, to be refined, so that we are people of **love**.



MARK 12:31

We **love** to play games...especially at Christmas. I have lots of memories of playing card games and board games growing up. We still try to do things like this today as a source of laughter and community. What I find with most games is that many games are too much to understand at first. Too many nuanced rules and strategies. Too many things to remember and practice. It is only when I know the basics and start playing do the rules make sense. It is only when I am in the midst of the game do things go from theoretical, to practical; from conceptual to actual. If we think a game is too difficult, or we get bogged down trying to learn all the rules, regulations, theories and strategies, we won't ever play the game.

As people of faith, we have a tendency to put a whole bunch of rules and regulations on our faith. We like to throw out theoretical and conceptual ideas...but we haven't even begun to understand the basics.

Christ was once asked what is the greatest commandment. At that point there were 600 some odd rules and commands that the Hebrew people were trying to follow. On top of that, they had all the additional "house" rules or strategies to make sure those 600 or so some odd commands were followed. People became obsessed with the rules so much so, that they were missing some of the most basic things.

When Jesus was asked what the greatest was among all those commandments, he responded with the Shema. The Shema is the Hebrew word for Hear or Listen...but it also means Obey or Follow Through. So when the ancient Hebrew people learned this truth, it wasn't just "hear this great idea", it was "hear this and do this, listen and obey."

THURSDAY

The Shema is found in Deuteronomy 6 and is one of the most cherished pieces of scripture. It says that we should **love** the LORD our God with everything; all our heart, soul, mind, and strength. And then Jesus says there is another that is like it. You shall **love** your neighbor as yourself. Jesus is quoting Leviticus 19:9-18. The scripture is talking about how we are called to sacrifice our own profits, giving generously, not oppressing or lying or taking vengeance or bearing a grudge against others. This is living in a way that means that both our neighbors and foreigners are called to be **loved**. Both our family and enemies are called to be **loved**. Both the good and the bad are called to be **loved**.

Jesus says, if you can do this, everything else will fall into place. If you can know these basics AND live them out, you won't need to worry about theories or strategies. Everything else will fall into place. **Loving** God should cause us to **love** others. **Loving** others should cause us to **love** God. If both of those things aren't happening, we may need to ask ourselves if we are really **loving**. Are we **loving** God? Are we **loving** neighbors?

If you ask what is more important, you are asking the wrong question. Our **love** for God and for Neighbor informs the other.

This Christmas, find ways that **love** can be demonstrated towards others because of the **love** that you have for God, and let the **love** for others deepen the **love** that you have for God.

Consider getting out a game or a deck of cards to play. While you are playing, think about how once you get into the game it easy to be in it and have fun. Think about the good gifts that come with the boundaries of **loving** like Christ **loves**.

JOHN 3:16

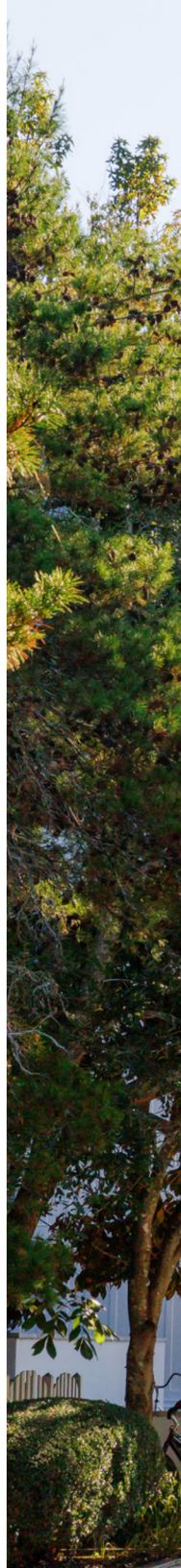
I often have great expectations about Christmas. I expect that Christmas eve is going to be calm and peaceful. Christmas eve night is going to be reflective, memorable, and beautiful. I expect that we are going to fall asleep to the sound of George Bailey talking about lassoing a moon for Mary and wanting to live again. I expect to have sweet dreams all snug in our beds, with visions of sugar-plums dancing in our heads. I expect to wake up to a beautiful Christmas morning where everyone is happy and appreciative of what they get. These are all great expectations which are usually unmet.

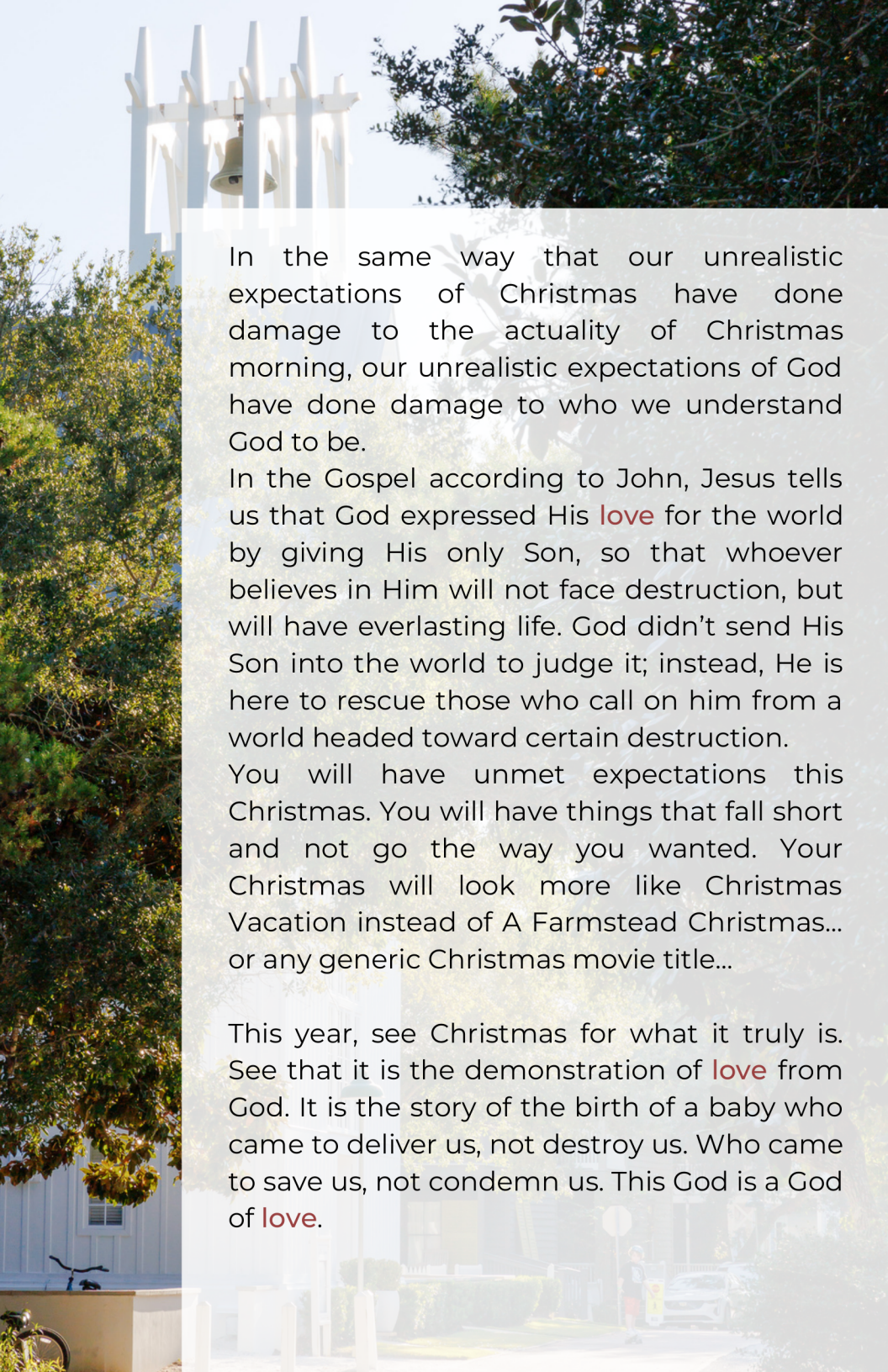
Stress and tension cause squabbles on Christmas eve. Comparison and lack of communication lead to disappointment.

The Hallmark Christmas movie is not your Christmas, the movie is a manufactured story where everything works out perfectly.

So what should we really expect instead of perfection?

For many of us, we have this idea about our faith and our God that paints him as a wrathful angry God. We think of him as a God who is watching and waiting for us to slip up so he can punish us. We think he is like an auditor that is programmed to look for our errors and mistakes. This expectation of God is wrong. This idea is incorrect.





In the same way that our unrealistic expectations of Christmas have done damage to the actuality of Christmas morning, our unrealistic expectations of God have done damage to who we understand God to be.

In the Gospel according to John, Jesus tells us that God expressed His **love** for the world by giving His only Son, so that whoever believes in Him will not face destruction, but will have everlasting life. God didn't send His Son into the world to judge it; instead, He is here to rescue those who call on him from a world headed toward certain destruction.

You will have unmet expectations this Christmas. You will have things that fall short and not go the way you wanted. Your Christmas will look more like Christmas Vacation instead of A Farmstead Christmas... or any generic Christmas movie title...

This year, see Christmas for what it truly is. See that it is the demonstration of **love** from God. It is the story of the birth of a baby who came to deliver us, not destroy us. Who came to save us, not condemn us. This God is a God of **love**.



JOIN US FOR CHRISTMAS EVE

4:15 OR 5:30

WE WILL HAVE A FESTIVE ATMOSPHERE INCLUDING
BLANKETS, AND HOT COCOA FOR GROVE SEATING

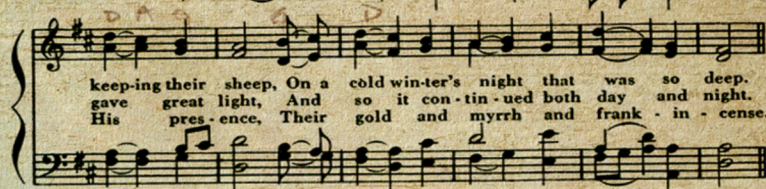
CHRISTMAS DAY
NO SERVICE

PLEASE SPEND THE DAY CELEBRATING WITH THOSE YOU LOVE

The First Noel

MODERATELY

Traditional



REFRAIN.



This medieval Shepherd's tune first appeared in print in England and is, the reader will note, the story of the Nativity as told to the Shepherds by an angel

THE BIRTH OF CHRIST

LUKE 2

In those days a decree went out from Caesar Augustus that all the world should be registered. This was the first registration when Quirinius was governor of Syria. And all went to be registered, each to his own town. And Joseph also went up from Galilee, from the town of Nazareth, to Judea, to the city of David, which is called Bethlehem, because he was of the house and lineage of David, to be registered with Mary, his betrothed, who was with child. And while they were there, the time came for her to give birth. And she gave birth to her firstborn son and wrapped him in swaddling cloths and laid him in a manger, because there was no place for them in the inn.

And in the same region there were shepherds out in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night. And an angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were filled with great fear. And the angel said to them, "Fear not, for behold, I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people.

For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord. And this will be a sign for you: you will find a baby wrapped in swaddling cloths and lying in a manger.” And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God and saying, “Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace among those with whom he is pleased!”

When the angels went away from them into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, “Let us go over to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has made known to us.” And they went with haste and found Mary and Joseph, and the baby lying in a manger. And when they saw it, they made known the saying that had been told them concerning this child. And all who heard it wondered at what the shepherds told them. But Mary treasured up all these things, pondering them in her heart. And the shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen, as it had been told them.

MERRY CHRISTMAS
TO YOU AND YOURS





THECHAPELATSEASIDE.COM

[@THECHAPELATSEASIDE](https://www.instagram.com/THECHAPELATSEASIDE)

PODCAST-[THE CHAPEL AT SEASIDE](#)

INFO@THECHAPELATSEASIDE