

**BE STILL
AND
KNOW**



**Immanuel Lutheran
Advent Devotional 2025**

This devotional was prepared by confirmands, teachers, and leaders in our church. We hope that this can be used as a tool at home for personal daily reading of God's Word. We encourage you to invite friends to our special Advent & Christmas services and have listed the dates and times below. If you would like another copy of this devotional you can find it on our website at **www.ImmanuelBayCity.com** under the Advent post in upcoming events. Blessings as you use this in personal meditation.

Advent begins Sunday November 30th. The following Wednesday, a three-part series for Advent, "His Name Shall Be Called," will begin. Please plan to join us on Wednesdays for worship during this Advent season. Services will be held at 6:30 p.m. Dinners will be hosted by Immanuel boards and groups starting at 5:00pm.

November 29& 30 -1st Sunday of Advent

December 3- Advent Midweek 1 (Wonderful Counselor)

December 6 & 7- 2nd Sunday of Advent

December 10- Advent Midweek 2 (Almighty God)

December 13 & 14- 3rd Sunday of Advent

14th ILS Lower Grades Christmas Program

December 17- ILS Upper Grades Christmas Program

December 20- 4th Sunday of Advent

December 21- Christmas Cantata

December 24- Christmas Eve Services

1:30pm – Prince of Peace

5:00pm – His Name Shall Be Called Christmas Program

7:00pm – Candlelight Christmas Eve Service

December 25- Christmas Day (with Holy Communion)

10:00am

Sunday, Nov. 30th

"The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light; those who dwelt in a land of deep darkness, on them has light shone." **Isaiah 9:2**

There are many themes in the season of Advent. Most think of it as the days leading up to Christmas, which it is. The Church historically has paired the anticipation of the coming of the newborn King with the anticipation of Jesus' return as King of Kings on the last day. Today the prophet Isaiah begins this Advent season for us with yet another theme, light and darkness.

For Michiganders, this is fitting because our winters have long nights and grey days. The contrast of darkness and light is all around us. We are a people who walk in darkness literally in Advent and throughout winter. We combat the dark cold bleakness of winter with Christmas light displays, well stocked fireplaces, warm dishes shared with loved ones.

Isaiah is not merely talking about physical darkness. He reminds us that we are not only literally walking in darkness, but are spiritually walking in darkness apart from Christ. Because Jesus is the light that has shown in the land of deep darkness. Not as a guard tower's spotlight accusing the wicked, but as the light of a search party seeking to rescue.

Jesus has come to shine His light on us, so that we might see and live in Him and His love. Those who dwelt in a land of deep darkness, on them has light shone!

Lord, shine your light in our lives. Give us sight to see your love and in return love our neighbors who walk in darkness. In Jesus' name, amen.

My hope is that this Advent devotional might shine the light of Jesus every day for you this blessed season.

Pastor Garcia, Immanuel Lutheran

Monday, Dec. 1st

"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."

Isaiah 9:6-7

Advent is an important time in the church year. It is the time before the savior is born and leads up to it. In Isaiah it talks about how a son is given to us and he is so great that he's not only known by one name but by many.

Isaiah describes Him as "Wonderful Counselor," meaning he's our guide and we can trust him to lead us. "Mighty God," meaning he is God and he can do anything. "Everlasting Father," meaning he's our protector. "Prince of Peace," meaning he brings peace, and we can rely on him. I am glad that I have a God like this because he's all these things and no one person can be all of them, but he is.

Dear Lord, thank you for sending your son to be our guide and protector. And help us to know this and keep his commands. Amen.

May our Prince of Peace be in your heart this Advent season as you remember all who Jesus is for you!

Emma, 8th Grade, Immanuel Lutheran School

Tuesday, Dec. 2nd

"I wait for the Lord, my soul waits, and in his word I hope" ***Psalm 130:5***

We all love Christmas. We get to hang out with family and friends; we get presents and we love to count down the days till we get those presents. The church also counts down the days until Christmas. The church calls this the season of advent.

Psalm 130:5 is a good verse for Advent because in this verse they talk about how we wait for the Lord and in advent we wait for Christmas. During this season we should remember this verse and read His word because that is our hope.

Have you ever had to wait for something? Whether that is a present or the results of a test. Psalm 130:5 says that we should have the same hope for the Lord as we do for a good result on our test or that present, we asked for and have waited a long time for.

Dear God, please help us to be patient while we wait. Amen.

This advent season remember this verse when you start to think about that present instead of God.

Caleb, 8th Grade, Immanuel Lutheran School

Wednesday, Dec. 3rd

"A voice cries: "In the wilderness prepare the way of the Lord; make straight in the desert a highway for our God. 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. And the glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together, for the mouth of the Lord has spoken."

Isaiah 40:3-5

He's coming! He's coming! The King is coming! We want everything to be just right. We look around, and suddenly we see the clutter we've been walking past for days, weeks, or even years. We better get our act together and look presentable. The pressure builds as we hastily get ready.

Out with the old and in with the new. What clutter do you need to remove as you prepare for Christmas this year? Maybe you'll get rid of old toys or clothes that have been outgrown. Maybe you're getting ready to move in a new direction in life. Rather than preparations that distract, try removing things, maybe even internal thoughts, so you'll be ready to receive this year.

He is coming to us!? What an honor! Yet, we know that no matter how much tidying we do, it's not going to be enough. He is too great. We are so lowly in comparison. The good news is that it is ultimately Jesus that prepares us for heaven. Through baptism He cleanses us, making us squeaky clean and fit to meet the King.

Lord, prepare us this season so that we would know you more fully. Help clear the path that blocks our view of You. In Jesus' holy name we pray. Amen.

This Advent, I hope you find peace and joy.

Deaconess Lisa, Immanuel Lutheran

Thursday, Dec. 4th

"and he will go before him in the spirit and power of Elijah, to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just, to make ready for the Lord a people prepared." Luke 1:17

This verse talks about the mission of John the Baptist to prepare the coming of Jesus. He confronted people and told them how to change their behavior like being honest, he baptized people in the Jordan river as a symbol of repentance. He told them to live righteously. The preparation of this involved repentance.

We should try and turn our heart so that we can be prepared for Jesus. We need to repent for what we do wrong. When we turn from sin, God gives us good judgement and good thinking of how you live your life. This Advent starts with repentance so that you can be an influential person to someone around you, by showing the love of God through your actions, so that they can see how much love He has for everyone through you.

Heavenly Father Thank you for the powerful message from Luke, I pray that you would turn our hearts to you. Help me turn away from sin and live a life that makes an impact or difference for Jesus. Grant me the knowledge, understanding and judgement to create a life that honors you . Amen

My wish for this is so you can be able to show God's love to other people through yourself and have a good understanding of what he has planned for you.

Bre'Anna, 7th Grade, Immanuel Lutheran School

Friday, Dec. 5th

"Behold, the days are coming, declares the Lord, when I will fulfill the promise I made to the house of Israel and the house of Judah. In those days and at that time I will cause a righteous Branch to spring up for David, and he shall execute justice and righteousness in the land. In those days Judah will be saved, and Jerusalem will dwell securely. And this is the name by which it will be called: 'The Lord is our righteousness.'" **Jeremiah 33:14-16**

"If you died tonight, do you know if you are going to heaven?" This was a question that was popular in the Kennedy Evangelism Program, where Christians were trained to ask a series of questions to people in their neighborhood or on the streets. It is a natural question that everyone is bound to ask.

Jeremiah tells God's people in the Old Testament that their righteousness is coming. The reason that they will be able to say that they are going to heaven is because of the hope that they have in God's promise—the faith that "The Lord is our righteousness."

This is the same faith that we hold onto. The difference is that Jesus has come. We know the "Branch of David" by name! Jesus did come as He promised and in Advent while we celebrate His birth we also look to His return. Because He alone is our righteousness, we pray come quickly Lord. We know we are going to heaven because Jesus died and rose to forgive our sins.

Merciful Lord, your are our righteousness. Thank you for cleansing me of my sins. Thank you for the hope that I have in the life to come. Give me your peace as I celebrate your birth this Christmas and help me share the hope I have in you with others. Amen.

Jesus is your righteousness! Celebrate with joy the hope that you have in Jesus.

Pastor Garcia, Immanuel Lutheran

Saturday, Dec. 6th

“May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that by the power of the Holy Spirit you may abound in hope.”

Romans 15:13

Advent is a season of hopeful anticipation, a time to prepare our hearts for the coming of Christ—both His birth and His promised return. It reminds us to pause and reflect on God’s peace, joy, and faithfulness. As Romans 15:13 says, *“May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in him, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.”* During Advent, we remember that Christ is the true Light who brings hope into our darkness and fills us with lasting joy and peace.

When God’s promises fill us, His hope starts to shine through us. That means even when things don’t go our way we can still have a good attitude and help others feel hopeful too. Today, you can pray and ask God to help you trust Him more and to fill you with His peace. Then, share that hope with someone who needs it!

Jesus has come to fill us with hope so that we hope to see Him in heaven in Jesus name we pray Amen.

My hope is that God may fill you with hope and the Holy spirit may surround you with hope.

Christopher, 7th Grade, Immanuel Lutheran School

Sunday, Dec. 7th

"And the angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus. 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 father David, and he will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end." **Luke 1:30-33**

Have you ever been to a party that you never wanted to end? I remember going to, my classmate, Summer's house for her birthday party. The whole first grade class was invited, and we had pizza and she opened presents and we ran around the back yard! It was the best! I didn't want to leave. Which is funny, because before my mom dropped me off I was almost crying in the car because she was going to leave and I was going to be there for two hours without her. As soon as we stepped through the door Summer and all my friends shouted my name and I placed my present in the pile of presents. I don't even remember my mom leaving. Next thing I know my mom was back and was telling me it was time to go. But I didn't want it to end.

"Of His kingdom there will be no end." On this side of things many of us feel anxious about forever. It will be a whole new experience for us. But I have a feeling it will be a little like Summer's birthday party. Time will fly and hours we be indistinguishable from seconds. And in His Kingdom, we will already be home. Jesus came into this world to live in the seconds and hours of life. The good ones and the bad ones. All so He could give us an everlasting Kingdom with Him. Let's celebrate His birthday with the hope of eternity on our minds!

Heavenly Father, prepare our hearts to celebrate the birth of your Son our Savior. We know He will return to make all things new. Until then, guide us by Your Spirit to celebrate the hope we have and invite others to join the party. In Jesus name, amen.

I hope that you have the most joyous celebration this year!

Pastor Garcia, Immanuel Lutheran

Monday, Dec. 8th

"Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign. Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel." ***Isaiah 7:14***

Advent is all about Jesus, and in Advent we see how Jesus is always there for us. This bible verse talks about a son (Jesus) whose name shall be called Immanuel. "Immanuel" means "God with us".

I go to a school that's named Immanuel and whether I'm at lunch, or learning in the classroom, or playing a sport, I have the reassurance that God will be there with me. In Isaiah 7:14 it says, "the Lord himself will give you a sign" and even though we might not get a specific sign each day, Jesus' birth is a wonderful sign that we have a Savior with us. We still know he's got a plan and he's going to be there.

In your life there are probably things you go through that are challenging or hard, but you can know God is with you. Adults may have jobs that can be stressful sometimes, like a test or big game for a kid. Things like meeting with a new boss or other things can make us nervous and worry even when we don't have to. When we are unsure, we must remember Immanuel, and know God's got this.

Lord, as we go through Advent help us to focus on the 1 true thing: the coming of Jesus Christ. You sent him to be with us always and we are very grateful for that. Amen.

May the love of God be shown to you this Advent season.

Peyton, 8th Grade, Immanuel Lutheran School

Tuesday, Dec. 9th

"Do not be deceived, my beloved brothers. Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow due to change." **James 1:16-17**

I used to love getting gifts. I still love getting gifts. However, I have also come to enjoy giving gifts much more than receiving. That's what they say isn't it, "tis better to give than to receive." God also loves giving gifts.

James reminds us that every good and perfect gift is from our Heavenly Father. There are no strings attached to His grace. Jesus made sure that His love was freely given for the whole world. He earned it of course, don't they also say, "nothing in this life is free." That is almost true. It's true in nearly every other sense. But the gift of life, hope, and peace is free for you forever. God's grace for you will never change.

There are plenty of people who call themselves Christians that try to attach strings to this gift. But don't be deceived, Jesus' forgiveness is free for you always.

Thank you, Jesus, for being our good and perfect gift. You came to us in our sin and saved us from ultimate consequences for our sins. Fill us with your peace to know that we are forgiven and free in you. Amen.

I hope you are blessed to give and receive gifts in celebration of the Greatest Gift!

Pastor Garcia, Immanuel Lutheran

Wednesday, Dec. 10th

"And Mary said, "Behold, I am the servant of the Lord; let it be to me according to your word." And the angel departed from her." Luke 1:38

In the Bible verse above what Mary is saying is that she is a servant of the lord and therefore will do what the lord requests of her. So, she tells the angel to go and tell the lord that whatever he requires she will do without a second thought and in doing so.

She ended up bearing our lord Jesus Christ.

Dear lord as Mary the mother of Jesus said "I am the servant of the lord" and I am one of many I will do what you ask and I will spread the word of the lord to those in need and to those without. This is my promise to you my lord Amen.

I wish you good health and fortune for the rest of your days and may the Lord be with you and guide you farewell.

Ezekiel ,7th Grade, Cramer Jr. High

Thursday, Dec. 11th

"I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and her offspring; he shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise his heel." ***Genesis 3:15***

When sin entered the world. God responded to it by offering all of us hope. In Genesis it talks about how God promised to crush the serpent and did. Even though sin is in the world God died for us so our sins could be forgiven. The enmity between the serpent and the woman shows our struggle against sin. Instead of stopping humanity, God promised to forgive us.

Sometimes I think we forget the true meaning of Christmas. Though the gifts and food are great. The real gift is the life of Christ. So, we can't forget to thank God for this beautiful gift, and we can't forget about advent. I know we love the advent calendars and all the great stuff we get out of them, but we can't forget the real part. Advent is about the anticipation of Christ, and worshipping him, because without him we wouldn't have eternal life.

Lord, thank you for crushing the serpent's head. Thank you for dying for us so we could be forgiven. In Jesus' name we pray, Amen.

I hope this devotion will remind you throughout advent how great the love and grace of God is.

Jackson, 7th Grade, Immanuel Lutheran School

Friday, Dec. 12th

"And Mary said, "My soul magnifies the Lord, and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior,"
Luke 1:46-47

Quick, grab that old magnifying glass from the junk drawer! Maybe it's been a while since you've used it, but trust me, it still works. Typically, I use a magnifier to see up close. But that's not what we're going to do this time; we are going to hold it up and look through it to see God. Ready, set, look! Can you see Him? Probably not physically, but if you were searching for Him through that lens, you were magnifying Him—because He was your focus.

When Mary, through the prompting of the Holy Spirit, declared, "My soul magnifies the Lord," she was reflecting in the same way as the first three verses of Psalm 34 does: with inward joy and marvel. Interestingly, neither the Psalmist King David nor Mary were in a physically easy, care-free time. You see, David was running for his life again, and young, pregnant Mary was carrying the Savior of the World. They were under extreme pressure every day, yet they magnified the Lord and found a way to rejoice.

Maybe you feel that way, too. Pressure, stress, and the demands on you are huge, but that's where we can follow their example: Magnify the Lord! Is it a good day? Magnify the Lord. Is it a bad day? Magnify the Lord. Is there trouble on the road? Magnify the Lord. Is a baby on the way? Magnify the Lord. Does the doctor have bad news? Magnify the Lord. Is it Friday? Magnify the Lord.

Holy Father, we magnify you; You alone are worthy of our praise and attention. Keep us focused on You and Your will for our lives. May our hearts be like Mary's, completely devoted to You. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

You may recognize that Luke 1:46-47 is the first line of a song, known as the Magnificat. I encourage you to look it up in your Bible or hymnal and recite the entire piece. Then read Psalm 34 and see how the thoughts parallel Mary's song. Be blessed as you rejoice with those faithful words.

Margaret Mills, Immanuel Lutheran

Saturday, Dec. 13th

"There shall come forth a shoot from the stump of Jesse, and a branch from his roots shall bear fruit. And the Spirit of the Lord shall rest upon him, the Spirit of wisdom and understanding, the Spirit of counsel and might, the Spirit of knowledge and the fear of the Lord."

Isaiah 11:1-2

We can use the phrase "a stump of Jesse" to represent hope and new life emerging from impossible circumstances. The image of the stump represents the royal line of King David, and from the base a branch will emerge symbolizing a future king. The Spirit's control gives different traits, including wisdom, understanding, counsel, and might. The key to new life is pointed out in verse 2, "The spirit of the Lord will rest upon him." This isn't temporary but a permanent indwelling of God's Spirit. **Hope-** reflects on the "stump" in your own life where you see no hope. Try and look for more things that bring you more hope.

Our leader Jesus Christ, ruled with wisdom, might, and knowledge bringing an era of peace, justice, and harmony to earth. This passage offers hope that a brand-new life can come from the dead or fallen circumstances, symbolized by the branch from a stump.

Lord, we thank you for the promise of hope in Isaiah 11:1-2 when our lives are feeling without hope you help us know that you are always there and always will help us grow. Thank you for sending Jesus, the Branch, and for the great gift of the Holy Spirit. Amen

I hope that this devotion will help you see that, in Jesus, there is always room to grow and there will always be hope.

Gemma, 7th Grade, Cramer Jr. High

Sunday, Dec. 14th

"The true light, which gives light to everyone, was coming into the world. He was in the world, and the world was made through him, yet the world did not know him." **John 1:9**

God is the true light of the world, He is the creator of all living things, and he is the light of the world. During Advent many people are looking forward to Christmas and getting gifts and all the other magical things, and they aren't focusing on the main meaning of Christmas, which is Jesus, the light of the world. Many people don't even know Jesus though he is their creator.

God gives light to everyone, not just people who believe and love him but even the people who don't know him. John isn't just talking about God being a true light but it's also talking about how Jesus the son of God is coming to save us from all our sins. The Gospel making a point that even when we don't know that Jesus is there with us everywhere we go to help us along the way.

Jesus has come on Christmas to shine his light to us so we can know and follow him, and he may guide us step by step.

Dear Heavenly father, you are the true light in a world full of darkness. Help the people who haven't found your light to find you. Help us while we come into this advent season to focus on the real reason for the season. In Jesus name, amen.

My hope is that this advent devotional might touch your heart in a way that may shine God's light on you every day.

Alexis, 8th Grade, Immanuel Lutheran School

Monday, Dec. 15th

"The Lord your God is in your midst, a mighty one who will save; he will rejoice over you with gladness; he will quiet you by his love; he will exult over you with loud singing."

Zephaniah 3:17

It's not uncommon during the Christmas season to feel overwhelmed by all of the "important" tasks that lie ahead of you. Lists are made, checked, and even checked twice, and yet it can still feel like we are missing something- but maybe it is not something that we are missing, rather it is someone.

Zephaniah 3:17 reminds us that we are never alone. Our God is not distant or detached; He is present in our midst. That little Babe lying in the manger of straw is the very flesh and blood fulfillment of God's promise, and He brings us assurance that in every season—whether we are facing joy or hardship—the Lord stands with us, both mighty and compassionate.

God's strength is not just for rescuing us from trouble. His strength is also expressed in deep, personal joy. Imagine the Creator of the universe rejoicing over you—not just quietly, but with gladness and even loud singing! His love is not conditional or fleeting; it brings peace that quiets anxious hearts. When life feels overwhelming, remember that God's love is a steady, unending, and unchanging presence, calming our fears and silencing our doubts.

Today, put aside your lists, doubts, and distractions that can turn your focus from the true meaning and hope of this **CHRISTmas** season. Trust that the Lord delights in you, not because of what you've done, but because of who He is. Rest in His presence, listen for His song, and know you are cherished—now and always.

I praise and thank You for being my loving Father, bringing Your might and Your strength to save me and Your love to shelter me in the quiet of Your presence. As we celebrate this CHRISTmas season, enable me to be still and experience Your glory in our midst this CHRISTmas season. Amen.

May your time spent in quiet reflection be blessed.

Kristin Jacobs, Kindergarten Teacher, Immanuel Lutheran

Tuesday, Dec. 16th

"And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father."

Philippians 2:8-11

When I first read this verse, I thought it was more of an Easter verse than an Advent verse. But after I looked more into the verse, I realized it does connect to Advent. At the beginning of verse 8 it says: "And being found into human form," This refers to Jesus being born. Jesus' birth was the first part of the passage, later in it the passage talks about His death on the cross. If you think about it, Jesus couldn't have died on the cross without "being found in human form."

During Advent we prepare for Jesus' coming and, in some ways, we also prepare for His death. I think it's so amazing that God came into the world to die for our sins and that's where the last part of the passage comes in. Philippians also talks about everyone praising God. That reminds me of the shepherds going to baby Jesus to praise him on Christmas. Which makes me think of all the ways we can thank and praise Jesus this Advent. Whether it's coming to Earth to be born or dying on the cross for our sins, we have countless things we can thank and praise God for.

Jesus, thank you for coming into this world to die for our sins. You are such an amazing Lord. Amen.

I hope during this advent you can see how Advent is just the beginning.

Madelyn, 7th Grade, Immanuel Lutheran School

Wednesday, Dec. 17th

"But you, O Bethlehem Ephrathah, who are too little to be among the clans of Judah, from you shall come forth for me one who is to be ruler in Israel, whose coming forth is from of old, from ancient days."

Micah 5:2

As I read this verse, I think of different people that were raised in ordinary small towns and end up being extraordinary athletes. I, myself, am an athlete and would be considered raised in a small town, as is Essexville, Michigan. A very well-known athlete that came to mind is Jerry Rice. Jerry grew up in a small Mississippi town with a population of roughly 600 people, and his high school was BL Moore in Oktoe, MS. Jerry's high school stats aren't exactly recorded due to how small his high school was. Jerry went on to receive a college scholarship however it wasn't for a large university. Despite this, he remained exceptional and was widely regarded as remarkable. Jerry went on to be drafted in the NFL and had a successful career. The people from his small town are very proud of him and see him as a positive role model. I am certain in his younger days, Jerry felt unseen and insignificant as I am sure the people of Bethlehem felt.

In a world that gives praise to people of influence and power, Micah 5:2 is telling a different truth. Our savior wasn't born in a royal palace but in a stable. God's plan often begins in small, hidden, and unexpected places. In this passage, God is faithful to his promises, no matter how long it had taken to unfold. My family and I believe this in our daily life as well as my mom always says, "You may not see the full picture yet but put in the hard work and good things will happen."

Lord Jesus, when I am feeling small and weak, remind me that you have a plan for me and will be with me every step of the way. Give me strength to keep moving forward and know greatness is not found in power or pride but in humility and faith. Amen.

God bless you this Advent season!

Mason, 7th Grade, Cramer Jr. High

Thursday, Dec. 18th

“And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth.”

John 1:14

This was one of the first Bible verses that I was able to confidently translate from the original ancient Greek. The “Word” is one way that John describes Jesus. God’s word gives us life because what God says is full of grace and truth. Jesus is the grace and truth of God incarnate. So in Jesus we have life and we can see it just as He has risen from the dead.

It never ceases to amaze me that God took on flesh to dwell among us. I know that the Holy Spirit is living and active in our midst, and I have walked the steps of where Jesus full of grace and truth lived and taught on this earth. Still, every Advent as we dig into the scriptures concern Jesus birth and His promised return, I cannot help but be in awe what God has done for us. It makes me want to join with the angles in singing “glory to God in the highest and on earth peace, good will, toward men!”

The glory of Jesus, the word made flesh, is for you. See for yourself how much He loves you by reading your Bible. Read it by yourself, with a loved one, or in a group of fellow Christians. See His glory it is for you!

O Incarnate Word, you came to us in glory to dwell among us. Continue to teach us of Your promise and fill us with Your grace. We praise you for your presence in our lives each and every day. Lead us by Your Spirit in what we do and say. Amen.

See Jesus is the Word incarnate full of grace and truth for you!

Pastor Garcia, Immanuel Lutheran

Friday, Dec. 19th

"But when the fullness of time had come, God sent forth his Son, born of woman, born under the law, to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as sons."

Galatians 4:4-5

TIME. Does that word create stress? Probably not the word itself, but the deadlines it represents can certainly induce anxiety. But "In the FULLNESS of TIME" from Galatians 4:4, there is a soft, gentle acknowledgement of the power behind the Creator of Time,

While we strive to control the chaos we have created in our lives, the Almighty One gracefully puts His plans and promises into action. Since the Creation, He ordered our days. After the first sin, He blessed us with the first promise a Savior. Promises built upon promises over the centuries, each to be kept "In the Fullness of Time." As babies blessed families in their births, each generation questioned when the Messiah would finally appear. Through captivity, famines, and foreign rule, people kept hoping, some believing, some doubting, but always wondering, about God's timing.

And then the glorious event occurred as proclaimed by the angels at His birth, because "the fullness of time had come." God sent forth His Son!

Now, in this Advent season, we wait again, for "the fullness of time" "to come, that Last Day when He appears in glory to take us home. In His glorious presence forever, we will never wait again, and never wonder "when?" We will forever be in His "fullness of time"! REJOICE!

For all the time you have waited for us, we thank You. For the gift of a Savior at just the right time, we thank You. And for the promise of Your Son, our Savior, coming "in the fullness of time" to take us to our heavenly home with You, we wait eagerly and thankfully. Amen.

May your time during the Advent season bless you as He fills your heart with His peace and promise.

A Joyful Sister in Christ

Saturday, Dec. 20th

"It shall come to pass in the latter days that the mountain of the house of the Lord shall be established as the highest of the mountains, and it shall be lifted up above the hills; and peoples shall flow to it, and many nations shall come, and say: "Come, let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob, that he may teach us his ways and that we may walk in his paths." ... and they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks; nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war anymore;"

Micah 4:1-3

In Micah 4 it talks about going up a mountain so we can learn God's ways and go in His paths. If you've ever seen the view at the top of a mountain you would know its the most beautiful thing ever. I would know myself after climbing up Arthur's Seat, the edge of a volcano in Scotland. The view at the top was amazing. Mountain top views are hard to get to. Although a lot of people don't think or realize, it's work both going up and down. It's steep and really exhausting work. I thought that it was going to be easy going down. It was easier, but still very challenging. You might be thinking how is going down hard. It's hard because you have to stay on the right path and not fall off and go down the wrong way. Just like we have to stay on the path to God and when we fall off that path God will always redirect us no matter what.

We must try very hard to stay on God's path. During this advent season there are many ways that we can try to stay on His path. Some of these things can be easy things that can take only a minute of two. Like adding others that aren't as fortunate as we are, that might not have as much food or a house like us, to our prayer lists. Another thing that we can do is read daily devotions this advent season so we can make sure that we don't fall away from God. In everything we can remember that Jesus made the hardest climb to the cross to save us all.

Dear God, please help us to follow your path so we can learn and follow your ways. Amen

My hope is that this advent devotion might help you walk in God's paths.

Carter, 7th Grade, Immanuel Lutheran School

Sunday, Dec. 21st

"Arise, shine, for your light has come, and the glory of the Lord has risen upon you. For behold, darkness shall cover the earth, and thick darkness the peoples; but the Lord will arise upon you, and his glory will be seen upon you. And nations shall come to your light, and kings to the brightness of your rising." **Isaiah 60:1-3**

As the winter starts to grow long and the sky in Michigan seems to hold a constant gray for just a short time between sunrise and sunset, I begin to yearn for the sun to break through all the darkness. In our reading today Isaiah talks about a thick darkness that covers the earth. It's the inescapable darkness of sin. We yearn for brighter days without the burden of sin and the result of our fall.

Isaiah points us to the Son, Jesus Christ, who is the light of the world. He says "the Lord will arise upon you, and his glory will be seen upon you." We know that there is nothing we can do to cure ourselves of our sinful state, but Jesus has done it all. When Jesus came to Earth His light began to shine upon us. His glory still radiates from His resurrected body.

We can bask in His light every day. When the sky is sunny and bright and when it's the deep darkness of winter. As His glory is seen upon us, nations will see His light reflected upon us. With the good news of Jesus, we have light for us that reflects out for others. What wonderful news that the Son is risen!

Jesus, you are the light of the world that the darkness cannot overcome. Let me bask in your light of grace. May the Holy Spirit reflect your gospel shining on me to others. So that all the nations might come to your light. In your name, amen.

When you notice that your days are dark, remember Jesus has come and He shines upon you!

Pastor Garcia, Immanuel Lutheran

Monday, Dec. 22nd

"For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation for all people, training us to renounce ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright, and godly lives in the present age, waiting for our blessed hope, the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ,"

Titus 2:11-13

Every couple weeks, for my confirmation class, I have to study verses. I don't slack on these verses and do them every week, not because I must study them to pass the class, but so I can learn more about the Bible. While I've never been widely known to enjoy studying memory, this year I've discovered the reason it's assigned. Not to annoy us, not to be challenging, but to expand faith in Jesus.

When we share that faith with others who might be mad, sad, grieving after a death, or even recovering from a traumatizing accident, it helps them gain faith. These acts can help these people pray and possibly even convince them to go to church. Even the smallest acts of kindness can cause somebody to change. When they turn to God for advice, Jesus always provides help when needed.

When people change their thoughts and take those small acts of kindness, it acts as a pay-it-forward chain. If I compliment someone on a shirt I like, they may think that was amazing and realize how small interactions can instantly change someone's mood or day, and they complement someone else, and so on. That's the power of Jesus. If you are kind to others, even the smallest act, that can change someone's life.

During the season of Advent, some families struggle to buy gifts, other families struggle with loss. If you gave a struggling mother and her family a meal, how much she would enjoy that. Just the smallest things can make the biggest changes.

Dear Lord, Please help the people who need help and support during hard times, please assist them with your love. Thank you for providing what we need. Thank you for giving us the ability to live.

Lincoln, 7th Grade, Western Middle School

Tuesday, Dec. 23rd

"He who testifies to these things says, "Surely I am coming soon." Amen. Come, Lord Jesus!"
Revelation 22:20

I don't know if I have the gift of hosting. I love being with people. When my house is full of friends, family, and guests my cup is full. But without fail the preparation before they come fills me with stress. At times I think this bleeds over to the guests who arrive early or come right on time. (Sorry if that has ever been you!)

Jesus is coming soon. I cannot wait for His return. I've been preparing for His coming my whole life and I hope you have too. Actually, maybe I should say I've been prepared and so have you. Because when Jesus comes, He will not come as guest but host. He has the gift of hosting, and He has prepared everything!

While we conclude Advent remember that Jesus will return in His perfect timing. Until then we can trust that we are prepared for that day. More than that we have a mission, given by Jesus, to baptize and teach others so that they might be prepared for His return as well. It's not too late to invite a friend, coworker, or neighbor to church with you for Christmas. Pay attention to those around you and offer the invitation for them to come and worship with you.

Lord Jesus, you host us every time we come to Church. We look forward to the day when you host us and all the redeemed in eternity. Give us your Spirit to see and invite those who might not know your love to join us and hear your forgiveness, mercy, and peace. Amen

I hope your hosting preparations go smoothly and that you are able to enjoy time with family and friends.

Pastor Garcia, Immanuel Lutheran

Wednesday, Dec. 24th

"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." **Luke 2:6-7**

To all appearances it was just another birth. Just another young mother going through the angst and pain of giving birth to her firstborn. They wrapped Him in swaddling cloths and laid him in a manger because all the other beds were taken.

Christmas Eve concludes Advent. The festival season of Christmas is upon us tonight! And maybe your Advent to all appearances was just another Advent. Maybe you feel like there is no room for you or feel more disconnected from others than you have in the past.

What our text reminds us today is that God uses these seemingly average times in life to accomplish His will. This I know for sure, you are loved by God beyond your imagination. The same Jesus who was wrapped in swaddling cloths would be stripped of all his clothes and He would take on all our shame and sorrow on His cross. He then rose for you clothed in majesty so that you might always have room with Him.

Heavenly Father, thank you for sending your Son to take on flesh and experience the hardships of life so that He might know us more and ultimately so that He might overcall all sorrow for us in His death and resurrection. Give us peace this Christmas and always as we worship the prince of peace.

I look forward to seeing you in Church today, where we will always have a place for you!

Merry Christmas!

Pastor Garcia, Immanuel Lutheran