

## My Prayer Journal

*Use this weekly prayer to help you begin your time with God each day.*

### Prayer of Confession:

*Holy God, we give You thanks for the gift of Jesus. Help us to hear this story anew in our lives this Advent season, and to emulate the angels, and the shepherds, in proclaiming the good news of Jesus' birth. As we seek to follow Jesus every day, show us what it means to follow Him as Shepherd, Savior, Christ, and Lord. We pray in His holy name, Amen.*

### My Prayers this Week:

### Family Time:

We read this week about hope and being expectant of things. Sometimes during the holiday season we expect people to do certain things or act certain ways. How can we be more like Christ in this season? How can we see the hope that we have in Jesus and have that pour out to others. Let's allow ourselves to be thankful for this season and all God has given us this year. While it has been a hard and difficult year we have hope in Christ.

## **MONDAY 11.30.20**

## **2 Samuel 7:4-17**

When the church celebrates Advent, it relives the expectancy of the people of Israel in the time of Jesus that some day, God would someday anoint someone to come and redeem the people of Israel. This "anointed one" (or, "Messiah") would inaugurate a period in which God's will is carried out on earth under a Godly king. This week, we will look at several of the Old Testament prophetic passages that contributed to this expectancy, beginning with today's reading from 2 Samuel. This passage is the root of the "messianic expectation" that was so prevalent in Israel in Jesus' day. By then, the Jews had lived under one oppressive regime after another for many years—but today's passage gave them hope that God would restore a righteous king to Israel. Nathan the prophet had informed King David, hundreds of years before Jesus, that while David's role had been to defeat Israel's enemies and bring peace to the land, it was his son who would build a temple for God. His prophecy concluded with the final promise to King David that "your kingdom will endure forever."

- Why do you think this promise gave hope to the Israelites even though they had lived under the oppression of Babylonians, Persians, Greeks, and now Romans, for 600 years?

## **TUESDAY 12.1.20**

## **Isaiah 49:1-6**

This part of the book of Isaiah was written in the period of the Babylonian exile—after the Kingdoms of Israel and Judah had both been destroyed by conquering armies. Some of the people had been exiled far from the Promised Land, to the city of Babylon in modern day Iraq, while others had dispersed to Egypt and throughout the modern day Middle East. Isaiah writes with the voice of a servant of God who will be raised up by God to gather these dispersed Israelites together again, and who will actually unite non-Israelites (Gentiles) with them under God's reign. Isaiah prophesies that in that day, Israel will no longer be subject to foreign rulers, but that rather, foreign rulers will bow down before them. His words sank deep into the Jewish self-understanding, and combined with the promise of David's eternal kingdom from yesterday's reading, contributed strongly to the expectancy of a Messiah. The Messiah would not only restore rightful worship of God among the Israelites, but would also fulfill God's original promise to Abraham that "all peoples on earth will be blessed through You" (see Genesis 12:3).

- How would these words give hope to a people living in exile far from their homes? How are the promises of "restoration to God" and "salvation" linked?

## **WEDNESDAY 12.2.20**

## **Jeremiah 31:23-34**

Jeremiah also wrote to provide hope to the Israelites in exile in Babylon. Like Isaiah, he promises that Israel will be restored to their homeland and reunited with their dispersed relatives. But in this passage, Jeremiah also gets closer to the root of the problem. He recognizes that Israel had been conquered and sent into exile because of their failure to live to God's expectations that had been set forth in the laws of Moses. Jeremiah adds a new element to the Messianic expectation—God's promise of a new, different kind of covenant with the Israelites. The promise is that in this future day, the law will not merely be something set down on stone, with rules to be memorized and adhered to. Rather, it will involve a deeper, personal kind of change which makes obedience to God an intrinsic part of who we are. Jesus' disciples, and all followers of the Messiah afterwards, understood Jesus' promise of the Holy Spirit at the Last Supper to be the fulfillment of this promise, fulfilled when one surrenders their life to Christ. The expectation of ancient Israel was that the Messiah would inaugurate the new age where all this was possible.

- What does it mean to you to have the law "written on your heart"? Do you expect to "know God" this deeply?

## **THURSDAY 12.3.20**

## **Micah 4:6-5:5**

The prophet Micah wrote about 150 years prior to the Babylonian exile that was the focus of Isaiah's and Jeremiah's Messianic prophecies. At the time Micah wrote this book, the Israelites had divided into two rival kingdoms, Israel to the north, and Judah to the south. Both had fallen into disobedience to God, and the northern kingdom of Israel was about to be besieged by the superpower, Assyria. Yet Micah sees beyond that imminent danger to a future day when the people of Israel would be restored. One of the most impactful parts of his prophecy was the expectation that a future, powerful, Godly leader for Israel will arise from the small and insignificant village of Bethlehem. Micah claims this ruler will have ancient origins, and will bring security and peace to the Israelites. According to Matthew 2:3-6, this was the prophecy the chief priests pointed to when King Herod asked where the Messiah ("the Christ," in Greek) was to be born, since the magi had told him a new "King of the Jews" was about to be born. From the earliest days of Messianic hope, the people knew—the Messiah will arise from Bethlehem.

- What do you think is significant about the fact that Bethlehem is so "small among the clans of Judah"? Where do we usually expect powerful leaders to arise from?

**FRIDAY 12.4.20**

**Ezekiel 37:15-28**

Writing from exile in Babylon, Ezekiel, like Isaiah, prophesies about the rise of a great king who will reunite the dispersed descendants of Israel, even bringing the divided kingdoms of Judah and Israel (here called Ephraim, one of its major tribes) back together, as symbolized in two sticks joined into one. At the same time, he affirms Jeremiah’s expectation that under this king’s leadership, the people will “follow my laws and keep my decrees” through a new “everlasting covenant.” But Ezekiel is more explicit than Isaiah or Jeremiah in his identification of this future king as “my servant David,” clearly referring back to the text from 2 Samuel that we began this week with. Ezekiel’s prophecy engrained even more deeply in the Messianic expectation the belief that the Messiah to come would have a direct lineage back to King David. Like David, the shepherd boy who became king, this future king would be a “shepherd” for His people. And like David, He will seek to lead as a righteous representative of God.

- How do you think the Jews’ day would have expected Ezekiel’s prophecy to be fulfilled?
- How does Jesus fulfill this prophecy? How is Jesus’ fulfillment of it different from your first answer?

**SATURDAY 12.5.20**

**Zechariah 9:9-17**

The prophecy of Zechariah comes from a later time in the Old Testament history of Israel. The Persian empire has now defeated the Babylonians, and the king of Persia has allowed the exiles to return to their homeland. The rebuilding of the temple in Jerusalem has begun but not yet been completed, and Zechariah has been encouraging the people to complete the work. Since the temple was understood as a dwelling place for God, Zechariah sees this work as a necessary precursor to God returning to dwell among His people. In Zechariah’s vision of a new king arriving in the newly restored Jerusalem, the king enters not on a magnificent war-horse, but on a lowly donkey. This will be symbolic of the kind of reign this King will embody—no chariots, war-horses, or battle bows. Instead, the land will enjoy peace, from “sea to sea.” This reign of peace, though, will lead to a final battle in which God’s ultimate salvation is won. Jesus proclaimed the inauguration of this reign of peace by entering Jerusalem on a donkey at the beginning of the week leading to His crucifixion, and years later, the writer of Revelation drew upon Zechariah’s imagery to portray God’s ultimate victory when Christ returns.

- How does Christ embody a reign of peace? Do you expect a future, actual peace? Why, when, and how?



Daily Study Guide

November 29-December 5, 2020

**Sermon Series: The Gifts of Christmas**

**Week One: “The Gift of Expectancy” - Rev. J. David Israel**

*Scripture for Sunday, November 29: Luke 2:8-20*

“Nearby shepherds were living in the fields, guarding their sheep at night. The Lord’s angel stood before them, the Lord’s glory shone around them, and they were terrified. The angel said, ‘Don’t be afraid! Look! I bring good news to you—wonderful, joyous news for all people. Your savior is born today in David’s city. He is Christ the Lord. This is a sign for you: you will find a newborn baby wrapped snugly and lying in a manger.’ Suddenly a great assembly of the heavenly forces was with the angel praising God. They said, ‘Glory to God in heaven, and on earth peace among those whom He favors.’ When the angels returned to heaven, the shepherds said to each other, ‘Let’s go right now to Bethlehem and see what’s happened. Let’s confirm what the Lord has revealed to us.’ They went quickly and found Mary and Joseph, and the baby lying in the manger. When they saw this, they reported what they had been told about this child. Everyone who heard it was amazed at what the shepherds told them. Mary committed these things to memory and considered them carefully. The shepherds returned home, glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen. Everything happened just as they had been told.” (CEB)

*Things that really impacted me from today’s sermon:*

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**Prayer Requests**

- Carol McKay
- Jim McKay
- Joe Lemaster
- Joyce Rasbach
- Annette Brown
- Debra Fisher
- Amy Cordeal
- Kathy Westhoff
- Debbie Thibault
- The Miller Family
- Julie Johnson
- Bettina Esser
- Charlotte Ottley
- Delaney Digman
- Bill Reichter
- Bob Vincent
- Peggy Cruse
- Bill Cruse
- Sophia Miller
- Judy Hoffman
- Nini Schneider

Everyone affected by the COVID-19 outbreak

Family and friends on the loss of Don Wilhite

Share prayer requests online at [livingwordumc.org](http://livingwordumc.org)