

The Best Things Ever Said About Christmas

An Advent Devotional



Introduction:

Christmas is filled with many things – beauty, wonder, mystery, glorious music, reflective art, joyful celebrations and much, much more. Christmas is also filled with words. It was this way from the beginning. The angels spoke words to Mary & Joseph and the Shepherds. And writers from Isaiah, Luke and John to Martin Luther and Saint Teresa have used their words to try and describe for us the mystery and meaning of Christmas. Their words are worth reflecting upon. That’s what this devotional is all about. I’ve utilized mostly quotes that are lesser known than the ones you see on bumper stickers and Christmas cards. So, we won’t be reflecting on, “*Jesus is the Reason for the Season,*” or “*Wise Men still seek Him!*” though both sayings are quite true.

I hope you find these readings & reflections helpful and inspirational. For even though mere human words can never fully describe the mystery of the Invisible God coming to us in the Jesus of Bethlehem, it’s certainly worth trying! I suggest reading the quotes twice to help reflect more fully on their meaning.

May God bless your Advent/Christmas season with true wonder and pure awe, with deep gratitude and divine love!

Rev. Dr. Rich Knight, Pastor
Central Congregational Church
Chelmsford, Massachusetts
www.cccchelmsford.org

Sun. Dec. 1, 2019

I love Christmas. Let the sleigh bells ring. Let the carolers sing. The more Santas the merrier. The more trees the better. I love Christmas. The ho, ho, ho, the rooty toot toot, the thumpity, thump, thump, and the pa rum pum pum pum. The "Silent Night" and the sugarplums. I don't complain about the crowded shoppes. I don't grumble at the jam-packed grocery store. The flight is full? The restaurant is packed? Well, it's Christmas. And I love Christmas . . . the tinsel and the clatter and waking up "to see what's the matter." Bing and his tunes, Macy's balloons, Mistletoe kisses, Santa Claus wishes, and favorite dishes. Holiday snows, warm winter clothes, and Rudolph's red nose. I love Christmas. I love it because somewhere someone will ask the Christmas questions: What's the big deal about the baby in the manger? Who was he? What does this birth have to do with me? The Christmas season prompts questions. --Max Lucado



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For Reflection: What do you like most about the Christmas Season? Do you agree with Max Lucado that Christmas prompts questions? If so, which questions arise for you?

Prayer: Loving God, help me enjoy this Christmas season, for your birth deserves all the lights, decorations and festivities we can muster. But make this season a time of spiritual growth, too, through my questions, reflections and prayers. Amen.

Mon. Dec. 2, 2019

Christmas is a necessity. There has to be at least one day of the year to remind us that we're here for something else besides ourselves.
- Eric Sevareid

Christmas does indeed remind us that we're not just here on earth to live for ourselves. Jesus embodied the truth that we're here to love, serve and give. Many charities receive half of their yearly donations during the month of December. And many of us find ourselves much more willing to stretch and give during the Christmas season. It strikes me that all the giving that happens in December is a wonderful way to celebrate our Savior's birth!

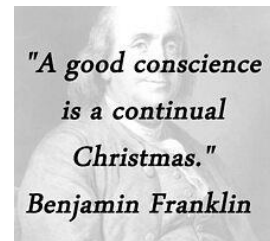
For Reflection: In what way is Christ teaching me to live not just for myself?

Prayer: God, help me to celebrate your gift to us in Christ by giving of myself, this Christmas and always. Amen



Tues. Dec. 3, 2019

*How many observe Christ's birthday! How few, His precepts!
Benjamin Franklin*



Without meaning to put a damper on the holidays, there is one unusual thing about Christmas that's worth thinking about. It's this: the focus is almost entirely on Jesus' birth and not on his life. When I was boy I remember my mother taking me to a log cabin where apparently Abraham Lincoln was born. But other than that I don't know anything about his birth, and on President's Day I don't hear anyone talking about the circumstances of his entry into the world. But we do hear about his life, his courage, his importance in American history. Likewise, I don't know anything about Martin Luther King, Jr.'s birth. I'm not sure who else was present, except his mother. And on Martin Luther King Day, I don't hear anything about his birth, just about his life, his teachings, his legacy. So this Christmas let's take some time to remember the teachings of Jesus – the Beatitudes, the Lord's Prayer, the parables, love your enemies, go the extra mile, give to those in need, forgive as God has forgiven you, abide in God's love and much, much more. And let's not just remember his teachings, let's recommit ourselves to living them out!

For Reflection: Which of Jesus' teachings are the hardest to follow? Which are most needed today – in your life and in the world?

Prayer: Lord Jesus, help me to live out your teachings every day, so that I might be part of your living legacy. Amen.

Wed. Dec. 4, 2019

*I dreamed it was Christmas Eve,
and while waiting for a green light
I noticed the manger scene on the church lawn.
It's all so overwhelming,
this Christmas business, I thought.
The shopping and singing and partying
and gift wrapping and Santa Claus and Jesus,
I feel wonderful then guilty
then joyful then confused. God help me, I thought.
And the light changed, and the
baby in the manger smiled.
Joe Hickman*

For Reflection: When does Christmas get overwhelming for you? How can the baby in the manger help?

Prayer: Lord of Love, be the Lord of my Christmas this year. When I start to feel the stress of the season, draw near to keep my eyes focused on You. Amen.

Thur. Dec. 5, 2019

Do you think you could contain Niagara Falls in a teacup? Is there anyone in our midst who pretends to understand the awesome love in the heart of the Abba of Jesus that inspired, motivated and brought about Christmas? God entered the world not with the crushing impact of unbearable glory, but in the way of weakness, vulnerability and need. On a wintry night in an obscure cave, the infant Jesus was a humble, naked, helpless God who allowed us to get close to him.

We all know how difficult it is to receive anything from someone who has all the answers, who is completely cool, utterly unafraid, needing nothing and in control of every situation. We feel unnecessary, unrelated to this paragon. So God comes as a newborn baby, giving us a chance to love him, making us feel that we have something to give him.

You could more easily catch a hurricane in a shrimp net that you can understand the wild, relentless, passionate, uncompromising, pursuing love of God made present in the manger.

- Brennan Manning

For Reflection: Have you ever thought of God's love as "wild, relentless, passionate, uncompromising and pursuing?" Which one of those words best describes the Christmas event?

Prayer: Holy and Amazing God, we could never capture Niagara Falls in a teacup, yet St. Paul says that, "In Christ all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell" (Col. 1:19). Though I can't handle all the fullness of God within me, please give me all I can handle. Amen.

Fri. Dec. 6, 2019

A Center of Love

At Christmas, Christ comes to us like a little child, small and helpless, so much in need of all that love can give.

Are we ready to receive Him? Before the birth of Jesus, His parents asked for a simple dwelling place, but there was none. If Mary and Joseph were looking for a home for Jesus, would they choose your house and all it holds?

Make your house, your family, another Nazareth, where love, peace, joy, and unity reign, for love begins at home. You must start there and make your home a center of love. You must be the hope of eternal happiness to your wife, your husband, your child; to your grandfather, your grandmother, to whoever is connected to you. - Mother Teresa from Life in the Spirit, 1983

Probably helpful to read it again.

For Reflection: How can my/our home be more a "center of love"?

Prayer: Dear Jesus, help me do my part in creating a home where you would feel welcome in, because love is at the center of it. Amen.



Sat. Dec. 7, 2019

A Better Gift



*Mend a quarrel
Seek out a forgotten friend
Share some treasure
Give a soft answer
Encourage youth
Keep a promise
Find the time
Listen
Apologize if you were wrong
Be gentle
Laugh a little
Laugh a little more
Express your gratitude
Welcome a stranger
Gladden the heart of a child
Take pleasure in the beauty and wonder of the earth
Speak your love
Speak it again
Speak it still once again.*

For Reflection: What *better gifts* can you give to someone today?

Prayer: Lord, help me give better gifts this Christmas . . . and always. Amen.

Sun. Dec. 8, 2019

“Our Greatest Need”

*If our greatest need had been information,
God would have sent an educator.
If our greatest need had been technology,
God would have sent us a scientist.
If our greatest need had been money,
God would have sent us an economist.
But since our greatest need was forgiveness,
God sent us a Savior.*

For Reflection: Do you agree with the poem above? Are there other “great needs” that Jesus satisfies? (purpose? peace? guidance? inspiration?)

Prayer: Lord Jesus, we call you “Savior.” Help me understand your saving work in my life. Amen.

Mon. Dec. 9, 2019

If you can't have a Merry Christmas, have a Holy Christmas.



Growing up Christmases were okay but they weren't great. It's probably because my Dad died on Dec. 13, when I was 8 years old. I'm sure my mother relived that loss most Decembers, and I probably did, too, unconsciously. For many people Christmas can be a sad time, even when we're supposed to be so happy. Think about the common expression, "Have a Merry Christmas!" "Merry" and "Christmas" seemed completed wedding together, as if that were the only type of Christmas you can have? But that's not true! You can have a meaningful Christmas, a prayerful Christmas, a giving/make a difference Christmas, a let-me-connect-with-an-old-friend Christmas, a musical Christmas, a quiet, reflective Christmas and so on. Most of all, *"If you can't have a Merry Christmas, have a Holy Christmas."* Let the message of this sacred season where we celebrate our Savior's birth be the main theme of your Christmas.

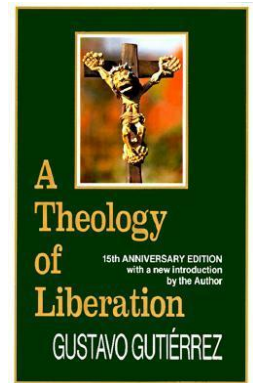
For Reflection: This Christmas season, is there sadness I need to talk out and also take to God?

Prayer: Loving God, thank you for the message of this holy season, that I am loved, I am cherished, I am not alone. Amen.

Note: Our "Blue Christmas" Gathering is tonight at 7:00 pm in the Church Parlor.

Tues. Dec. 10, 2019

Gustavo Gutierrez was born in Peru in 1928. He's a priest, professor, author and widely recognized as one of the founders of what's called, Liberation Theology. This theology reads the Bible from the perspective of the poor. Thus, Gutierrez and others, see things that we don't always notice in the texts, such as this:



There, on the fringe of society, the Word became history, contingency, solidarity, and weakness . . . Jesus was born of Mary among a people that at the time were dominated by the greatest empire of the age. Apart from its historical coordinates the event loses its meaning. To the eyes of Christians the incarnation is the irruption of God into human history; an incarnation into littleness and service in the midst of overbearing power exercised by the mighty of this world; an irruption that smells of the stable.

The Son of God was born into a little people, a nation of little importance by comparison with the great powers of that time. Furthermore, he took flesh among the poor in a marginal area – namely, Galilee; he lived with the poor and emerged from among them to inaugurate a kingdom of love and justice. That is why many have trouble recognizing him.

For Reflection: What do you think is the significance of Jesus being born into poverty?

Prayer: Lord Jesus, if you were born among poverty, maybe I need to reach out and spend more time with the poor . . .

Wed. Dec. 11, 2019

Philip Yancey did not have the same kind of upbringing as Gustavo Gutierrez (from yesterday's reading), but through a careful reading of the scriptures Yancey reaches a similar conclusion.

As I read the birth stories about Jesus, I cannot help but conclude that though the world may be tilted toward the rich and powerful, God is tilted toward the underdog. "He has brought down rulers from their thrones but lifted up the humble. He has filled the hungry with good things, but sent the rich away empty," said Mary in her Magnificat.

Growing up, Jesus' sensibilities were affected most deeply by the poor, the powerless, the oppressed – in short, the underdogs. Today theologians debate the aptness of the phrase, "God's preferential option for the poor" as a way of describing God's concern for the underdog. Since God arranged the circumstances in which to be born on planet earth – without power or wealth, without rights, without justice – his preferential options speak for themselves.

For Reflection: What do you think of the phrase, "God's preferential option for the poor"?

Prayer: God of Love, we know that you love all people, rich and poor and everyone in between, but you seem to understand and care for the poor most of all. Help me be like You. Amen.

Thur. Dec. 12, 2019

The "Yes" of Christmas

I realized that songs, good feelings, beautiful liturgies, nice presents, big dinners, and many sweet words do not make Christmas. Christmas is saying "yes" to something beyond all emotions and feelings. Christmas is saying "Yes" to a hope based on God's initiative, which has nothing to do with what I think or feel. Christmas is believing that the salvation of the world is God's work, and not mine.

- Henri Nouwen



It's probably helpful to read that one again.

For Reflection: By believing in Christmas, what sorts of things are we saying "Yes" to?

Prayer: Holy, Eternal God. Thank You for your initiative that first Christmas. Help me this Christmas to say "Yes" to all that I can see about all that you are and all that you call me to be. Amen.

*For no matter how many promises God has made, they are "Yes" in Christ.
And so through him the "Amen" is spoken by us to the glory of God.
II Corinthians 1:20*

Fri. Dec. 13, 2019

William Willimon is a Methodist preacher and former chaplain of Duke University. He's one of the finest preachers of our day. He's very funny and insightful, but not afraid to speak pointedly and poignantly, such as these words:



We are better givers than getters, not because we are generous people, but because we are proud, arrogant people. The Christmas story – the one according to Luke not Dickens – is not about how blessed it is to be givers but about how essential it is to see ourselves as receivers. We prefer to think of ourselves as givers – powerful, competent, self-sufficient, capable people whose goodness motivates us to employ some of our power, competence and gifts to benefit the less fortunate. Which is a direct contradiction of the biblical account of the first Christmas. There we are portrayed not as the givers we wish we were but as the receivers we are. Matthew and Luke go to great lengths to demonstrate that we – with our power, generosity, competence and capabilities – had little to do with God's work in Jesus. God wanted to do something for us so strange, so utterly beyond the bounds of human imagination, so foreign to human projection, that God had to resort to angels, pregnant virgins, and stars in the sky to get it done. We didn't think of it, understand it or approve it. All we could do, at Bethlehem, was receive it.

This strange story teaches us how to be receivers. The first word of the church, a people born out of so odd a nativity, is that we are receivers before we are givers. Discipleship teaches us the art of seeing our lives as gifts. That's tough, because I would rather see myself as a giver. I want power – to stand on my own, take charge, set things to rights, perhaps to help those who have nothing. I don't like picturing myself as dependent, needy, empty-handed.

This stranger comes to us, blesses us with a gift, and call us to see ourselves as we are – empty-handed recipients of a gracious God who, rather than leave us to our own devices, gave us a baby.

For Reflection: Is Willimon on to something, that our pride inhibits our ability to be receivers?

Prayer: This Christmas, Holy Wondrous God, help me to be a receiver. Help me see and receive the gifts you have in store for me this Christmas and always. Amen.

Sat. Dec. 14, 2019

In one of her sermons, Rev. Dr. Barbara Brown Taylor reflects on what must have happened in the heavens when God first told the angels of God's plan to come to earth as a baby. In response, Taylor surmises, the angels must have asked God,

Could you at least create yourself as a magical baby with special powers? . . . It wouldn't take much—just the power to become invisible, maybe the power to hurl bolts of lightning if the need arose. The angels all felt God's baby idea was a stroke of genius, but it lacked adequate safety features. God thanked the angels for their concern but said, no, God thought God would just be a regular baby. How

else could God gain the trust of God's creatures? . . . There was a risk . . . a high risk . . . but that was part of what God wanted us to know—that God was willing to risk everything to get close to us in hopes that we might love God again.

- *Barbara Brown Taylor, "God's Daring Plan"*

For Reflection: In what way was Christmas risky for God? How often does love involve risk?

Prayer: Lord Jesus, you taught us by your birth, your life and your sacrifice, that love is often risky and painful, but worth it. Thank you that you felt that we were worth the risk! Help us in those times when we're called upon to love with abandonment and risk. Amen and Amen.

Sun. Dec. 15, 2019 *Have yourself a Martin Luther Christmas*

As Christmas approached, Luther grew increasingly cheerful.

One of Luther's students wrote that, *"As Christmas approached, Luther grew increasingly cheerful. All his words and songs and thoughts concerned the incarnation of our Lord. Then he sighed and said, 'Oh, we poor people that we should be so cold and indifferent to this great joy that has been given us. For this is indeed the greatest gift, which far exceeds all else that God has created. Yet we believe so sluggishly, even though the angels proclaim and preach and sing, and their lovely song sums up the whole Christian faith, for 'Glory to God in the highest' is the very heart of worship."*



For Reflection: The carol says, *"Joy to the World, the Lord is Come!"* Are you/we feeling the Joy of Christ this season? If so, how would you describe what might be called, *spiritual joy*?

Prayer: God of Joy and Love, even when this season is busy and our to-do lists are too long and too much, give us your Joy; for your Joy will put everything else in proper perspective. Amen.

* * *

Martin Luther loved Christmas! Several of our most favorite Christmas traditions can be traced back to him. Luther viewed Christmas as an occasion for family feasts & celebrations as well as teaching the Christian faith. He encouraged his followers to give gifts to their children so they could experience grace, gifts freely given, just as Christ has been freely given to us. He moved the day of gift-giving from St. Nicholas Day, Dec. 6, to Christmas Eve, Dec. 24. Luther also loved Christmas trees and promoted their festive use for the holiday. He put little candles on his family Christmas tree, some say, to symbolize the stars over the stable in Bethlehem. Luther also loved to sing. He commissioned the writing of what we now call Christmas carols, and wrote at least five himself. Luther had a booming singing voice and would agree with the quote below from the movie *Elf*.

"The best way to spread Christmas cheer is singing loud for all to hear."

– Buddy the Elf (Will Ferrell) in Elf

Mon. Dec. 16, 2019

One of the most glorious messes in the world is the mess created in the living room on Christmas Day. Don't clean it up too quickly.

– Andy Rooney



A funny thing happened to a friend of mine. Bob (not his real name) is a great guy, in his mid-60's, with grown children. A few years ago Bob decided to get out his old family Christmas movies. Since his ancient movie projector was built in different era, it still worked after all these years. Bob's family loved watching those old films, seeing their children at such precious ages. Most of the time Bob was behind the camera and therefore not seen on film. But there was one Christmas when one of his sons did most of the filming. As Bob watched, he was horrified. "I was a jerk!" he said, "A total jerk!"

What Bob saw himself doing seemed harmless I'm sure at the time. He was collecting the wrapping paper as soon as it came off the presents. Sometimes he folded it up again right away to possibly be used again. Other times he stuffed the wrapping and ribbons in a large trash can. We Dads do this instinctively, because our greatest fear is that some present be lost under the wrappings and be accidentally thrown out. This must have happened to our cavemen ancestors, and so it's wired into us to clean up the paper right away. But what Bob saw was an uptight, grouchy, overbearing dad taking some of the joy out of Christmas morning. Ever since he told me that story, I've wondered what I've looked like on Christmas morning and have tried to be less fanatical about picking up the wrapping paper right away.

For Reflection: Read the Andy Rooney quote again and think about the ways we try to impose order and properness to Christmas. How might we experience more joy this Christmas by being a little more relaxed?

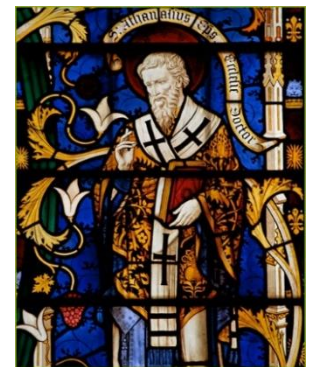
Prayer: God, help me be more relaxed this Christmas, so I might experience more joy. Amen.

Tues. Dec. 17, 2019

He Emptied Himself

*He became what we are that
He might make us what He is.*

Saint Athanasius, 295-373 AD



For Reflection: What did Athanasius mean by this quote?
What is it that Jesus is, that he helps us become?

After you've wrestled with that for a while, these words from C.S. Lewis will help:

The Son of God became a man to enable men to become the sons (and daughters) of God.

Prayer: Thank You, Dear Jesus, for making me what you already are – a Child of God! Amen.

*It is the mystery of Christmas Eve that has bonded us in a special way to God.
Before we were just creatures; now we are his children, and Jesus' family.*

Wed. Dec. 18, 2019

*Christmas is the gentlest, loveliest
festival of the revolving year –
and yet, for all that, when it speaks,
its voice has strong authority.
W. J. Cameron*

For Reflection: In what way does Christmas speak with authority?
(the nature of God? the empathy of God? the love of God?)

Prayer: Speak to me this Christmas, Holy One; and speak with authority. Amen.

Thur. Dec. 19, 2019

If you want to find Christmas, just follow the signs.

I once wrote a newspaper article entitled, "Christmas for Skeptics." In it I tried to make the case for finding the true meaning of Christmas in the traditional story, even if the details in the story are hard to swallow. *Did angels really speak to Joseph & Mary & the Shepherds? Was it really a virgin birth? Did the star really move?* These are questions that many people, faith-filled and otherwise, struggle with and stumble over. Seekers sometimes give up seeking when it comes to Christmas.



Here's a suggestion: Follow the signs. The miraculous details in the story are signs. They're not an end to themselves. They point us to go deeper to find the meaning of Christmas. The Virgin Birth is the Bible's way of saying, the life of Jesus is what it would look like if someone lived as if God were their Father. His was a human life infused with divinity, the goal for all God's children. The angels symbolize that God has a message for humanity in the life of Christ. Angels are God's messengers. They only show up in the bible when God has something big to say. Jesus' life was and is a message for humanity. And the star moving is the bible's way of saying, this is a cosmic event, even the heavens are moved! Don't miss it!

For Reflection: What's more important, the signs or what the signs point to?

Prayer: God, help me to follow the signs this Christmas to see what you're up to. Amen.

Fri. Dec. 20, 2019

Madeleine L'Engle (1918-2007) was a prolific writer (*A Wrinkle in Time*) & poet, as well as, a person of deep faith. What follows is part of an Advent meditation she wrote entitled, "*A Sky Full of Children*." In it she reflects on the Genesis 1:27 statement that we are "made in the image of God," but correctly points out that the Bible never defines what that means. She concludes:

Children of God, made in God's image. How? Genesis gives no explanations, but we do know instinctively that it is not a physical image. God's explanation is to send Jesus, the incarnate One, God enfleshed. Don't try to explain the Incarnation to me! It is further from being explainable than the furthest star in the furthest galaxy. It is love, God's limitless love enfleshing that love into the form of a human being, Jesus, the Christ, fully human and fully divine.

Christ, the Second Person of the Trinity, Christ, the Maker of the universe or perhaps many universes, willingly and lovingly leaving all that power and coming to this poor, sin-filled planet to live with us for a few years to show us what we ought to be and could be. Christ came to us as Jesus of Nazareth, wholly human and wholly divine, to show us what it means to be made in God's image.

For Reflection: How does Jesus' life show us, "*what we ought to be and could be*"?

Prayer: Lord Jesus, you were made/born in God's image to show us what the invisible God "looks" like. Give me that same look. Amen.



Sat. Dec. 21, 2019

*In bleak, doomed mid-December, it gets darker and darker and darker;
and then Jesus is born.*

- Wendell Berry

It's always darkest just before the dawn, goes the old saying. From my limited experience of watching sunrises, I think it's true. Some years in Acadia we go atop Cadillac Mountain to be among the first folks on the East Coast of the US to see the sunrise. It's not only dark up there; it's also cold, very cold, even in August at 5:15 am. But oh how things change when the sun comes up. Those first rays followed by that beaming ball of fire warms the body and the soul. Folks often cheer. It's a joyous, shared experience. You might feel alone in the dark, but not in the light.

Isaiah viewed the coming of the Messiah as a similar experience. "The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light. Those living in the land of deep darkness, on them the light has shined" (Is. 9:2).

I don't know if you're feeling darkness around you this Christmas. It may very well be that circumstances in your personal life or in your family members' lives or in the nation or something else,

have you feeling alone and in the dark. I pray that this Christmas you'll see a light, the Light. Maybe it's just a few rays of the dawn breaking through. But that might be all you need to through the night.

For Reflection: Has the darkness of the world been getting you down? Have you seen evidence of the Light trying to break through?

Prayer: Lord Jesus, you are the Light of the World. Shine down on me. Shine down on my family and friends. Shine down on your world. Shine, Jesus, shine! Amen.

Sun. Dec. 22, 2019



“One Solitary Life”

*He was born in an obscure village,
the child of a peasant woman.*

*He worked in a carpenter shop
and was an itinerant preacher.*

He never wrote a book. He never held an office.

*He did none of the things
one usually associated with greatness.*

*Twenty centuries have come and gone,
and today He is the central figure of the human race.*

*All the armies that ever marched,
all the navies that ever sailed,
all the kings that ever reigned, put together,
have not affected the life of man on this earth
as much as that One Solitary Life.*

For Reflection I offer you these words from author, Frederick Buechner

It is impossible to conceive how different things would have turned out if that birth had not happened whenever, wherever, however it did ... for millions of people who have lived since, the birth of Jesus made possible not just a new way of understanding life but a new way of living it. It is a truth that, for twenty centuries, there have been untold numbers of men and women who, in untold numbers of ways, have been so grasped by the child who was born, so caught up in the message he taught and the life he lived, that they have found themselves profoundly changed by their relationship with him.

Prayer: Lord Jesus, your birth and your life have made such a difference in our world. Make that same difference in my life. Amen.

Mon. Dec. 23, 2019

If there's one thing we should do this Christmas it's bake cookies? Send Christmas cards? Put up some decorations and/or a Christmas tree? Give the mailman/person a little gift? Get in touch with loved ones? While all those things can be a great part of Christmas, there's one thing you don't want to leave out – thanking God for Christmas. This little prayer can help:

*For the news given to the shepherds,
Thank you, Lord.
For the light that pierces the thickness of our night,
Thank you, Lord
For the child who is born,
Thank you, Lord.
For the longing for peace that is growing in our hearts,
Thank you, Lord.
For God who becomes visible in the birth of Jesus,
Thank you, Lord.
For our birth in God on Christmas night,
Thank you, Lord.*

Prayer: God of Love, Thank You for Christmas! Thank You for loving us so much that you gave us Jesus Christ! Amen.

Tues. Dec. 24, 2019 Christmas Eve

Here are two quotes from two giants of our faith. St. Augustine (354 AD – 430 AD) and Martin Luther (1483-1546) lived more than 1000 years apart, but when it came to the personal meaning of Christmas they were kindred spirits.

His birth is always happening. But if it does not happen in me, what does it profit me? What matters is that it shall happen in me.

- St. Augustine

Below is Luther's reflection on Luke 2:10 – "*Behold, I bring you glad tidings (good news) of great joy which is for you and for all people.*"

*He does not say, Christ is born, but **to you** he is born. Neither does he say, I bring glad tidings, but **to you** I bring glad tidings of great joy. Furthermore, this joy was not to remain in Christ, but it shall be to all the people Christ must above all things become our own and we become his. This is what is meant by Is. 9:6, "**Unto us** a child is born, **unto us** a son is given." To you is born and given this child." Of what benefit would it be to me if Christ had been born a thousand times, and it would daily be sung into my ears in a most lovely manner, if I were never to hear that he was born **for me** and was to be my very own?*



For Reflection: Do you realize Christ was born **for you**? What would it look like to *make Christ your own and to become his*?

Prayer: Thank You, Dear Jesus, that you were born for me. You lived, taught, died and rose for me and for all. Thank You! Thank You! Thank You! Amen.



Wed. Dec. 25, 2019 Christmas Day

Merry Christmas! Our Savior is born!

The very best words ever said about Christmas, of course, come from our scriptures. Here are just a few to help us celebrate this day:

Unto us a child is born, unto us a son given to us; and the government shall rest upon his shoulders; and he shall be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.
Isaiah 9:6

*But the angel said to them,
'Do not be afraid; for I bring you good news of great joy which is for you and for all people: for unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is the Christ, the Lord.'* *Luke 2:10-11*

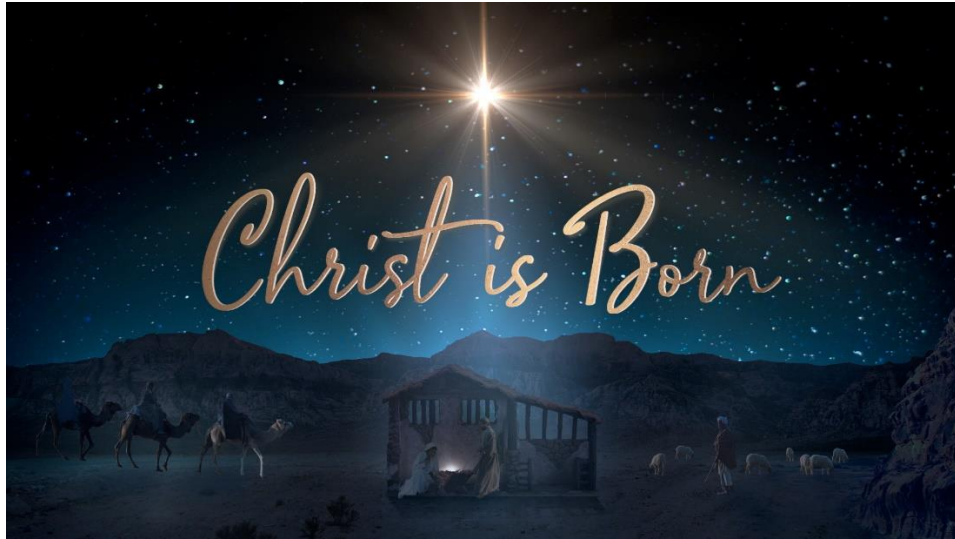
And you shall call him Jesus, for he shall save the people from their sins. *Matt. 1:21*

And the Word (God's message to us) became flesh and dwelt among us. *John 1:14*

For Reflection: Which verse says it best for you today?

Prayer: Thank You, Loving God, for this great and glorious day! Help me to live out my gratitude to you each and every day. Amen.

Have a Blessed and Beautiful Christmas!



Looking ahead

*When the song of the angels is stilled,
when the star in the sky is gone,
when the Kings and Princes are home,
when the shepherds are back with their flocks,
the work of Christmas begins:*

*to find the lost,
to heal the broken,
to feed the hungry,
to release the prisoner,
to rebuild the prisoner,
to rebuild the nations,
to bring peace among people,
to make music in the heart.*

Howard Thurman

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Rev. Dr. Rich Knight, Pastor
Central Congregational Church
Chelmsford, Massachusetts
www.cccchelmsford.org