

Sunday, December 14, 2025

GOD SEES US

*“My soul magnifies the Lord, and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior,
for he has looked on the humble estate of his servant.*

For behold, from now on all generations will call me blessed...”

Luke 1:46–48 ESV

Advent is a season of watching, waiting, and hoping. For parents, those are familiar rhythms. Whether you're expecting a child, raising one, grieving one, or praying for one, you know what it means to carry someone in your heart with longing.

For parents, and most often mothers, this time of year can also feel particularly stressful. We are navigating a whirlwind of responsibilities, high expectations, and the constant tension between the joy and the sacrifice of parenthood. It's not easy. There are moments in parenthood that feel thankless. There are times when you give your heart, your time, your body, and your soul to your children only to feel invisible, forgotten, ignored or taken for granted. No one says "thank you" for staying up all night with a newborn, for packing daily nut-free lunches, or for organizing birthday parties, or for giving up a career, or for giving up time for ourselves in order to raise children.

But God sees it all, just as he saw Mary. She was humble and willing to say "yes" to the unimaginable. He sees the quiet sacrifices of all parents just as he saw Mary's. Her life was completely derailed. And instead of fear or resentment, Mary sings a song of deep praise and trust.

Mary says, "He has looked on the humble estate of his servant." In other words: God sees me. Isn't that what we all long to know? In the exhaustion, the sacrifice, the unseen moments, God sees us. He doesn't overlook your sacrifice of your own ambitions and dreams to pour into the lives of your children. And he doesn't expect you to be a perfect parent.

So for the parents in the room, this Advent season remember: you carry light; you shape lives; you respond to God's calling with your body, your time, your tears, and your trust. It is not thankless work; it is holy work. And God sees it all.

Prayer: Dear Lord, Thank you for seeing me, even in the moments that feel unnoticed. Thank you for choosing Mary and reminding us that parenthood is a holy calling. This Advent season, help me to carry Your love with the same courage and humility as Mary. Let me find joy in the small, sacred work that You've entrusted to me. And when I grow weary, remind me: You see me. You are with me. And you are faithful. Amen.

Stephanie Schmid, Lisa Stokes and Caitlyn Watkins

Monday, December 15, 2025

JOY

*As the deer pants for streams of water, so my soul pants for you, my God.
My soul thirsts for God, for the living God. When can I go and meet with God?
My tears have been my food day and night, while people say to me all day long,
“Where is your God?”*

*These things I remember as I pour out my soul: how I used to go to the house of
God under the protection of the Mighty One with shouts of joy and praise among
the festive throng. Psalm 42:1-4*

In Scotland, we sang “O Love”, by Elaine Hagensberg. In that song there is a line that states, “Joy that seeks me through the pain.” The composer of this song took the words from a hymn written by George Matheson. He wrote this hymn on the eve of his sister’s wedding when he was recalling a painful episode of trial and desertion in his life. When he wrote the hymn, he was able to see that joy was able to grasp him throughout his journey and not let him go. Joy was a constant for him and carried him through his deepest and darkest times.

Many times, we are quick to mistake the word happiness for joy, or the other way around. For me happiness tends to be a temporary feeling, and one that is dependent on external situations. However, joy seems to be a sense of wellbeing that can only come from God— a sense that does not change.

Prayer: Lord, you seek me through pain, through sorrow, through happiness, through whatever I am going through. I thank you for being a God who gives me a joy that is deeper than any temporal feeling, a peace that passes all understanding, and hope in you. Amen.

Cheryl Vanture

Light the Third candle,
the Shepherds candle,
representing Joy



Tuesday, December 16, 2025

THE GIFT OF LIFE

“But you, beloved, build yourselves up on your most holy faith; pray in the Holy Spirit; keep yourselves in the love of God; look forward to the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ that leads to eternal life.” Jude 1:20-22

To me, the most precious gift is the gift of life—plain and simple. For a dear friend and his family, the most precious gift is being given a second chance at life.

COVID hit my friend hard, twice. Weeks of isolation in the hospital and weakness in his lungs made breathing and walking very difficult. Scooters, oxygen tanks, tubing, and medicine took over their home, and fear took over their hearts.

Still, they remained strong in their faith, in their love for each other, and their confidence in the doctors who were trying to save him.

God blessed my friend with an organ donor. On December 16, 2024, my friend was gifted a second chance at life. What a wonderous gift from God.

My friend is recovering nicely after his lung transplant. Gone are the scooter, oxygen tanks, endless tubing and constant fear.

My friend and his family have much to celebrate this Christmas season. We are all grateful to the glory of God for giving my friend the gift of life. Happy New Birthday, Skip.

Prayer: Merciful God, thank you for giving us life, for letting us do the ultimate gift to others by being organ donors after we depart, and the ability to receive these gifts. Your wonder and love never cease to amaze me. Amen.

Frances Bogle

Wednesday, December 17, 2025

WAIT FOR THE LORD

“Be strong, and let your heart take courage, all you who wait for the Lord.”

Psalms 31:24

I am a big fan of rollercoasters.

There, I said it. I'm sure you didn't expect that from one of your pastors, but it's true. Last summer, I rode all the rollercoasters at Six Flags in a single afternoon. And no, I didn't feel right for two days, but it was worth it.

My favorite part of a rollercoaster is the pause at the top of the first hill. For a heartbeat, the car stops – suspended between the safety of the station and the thrill of the track ahead. Then, the gravity shifts oh-so-slightly, and we are catapulted toward something new.

I would probably ride rollercoasters more often, except for the line. I don't like waiting in line. Maybe you dislike it as well. Most of us avoid waiting when we can. We leave early for work to avoid waiting in traffic. Or visit the grocery store at odd hours to avoid waiting in the checkout line. When waiting is unavoidable, we read the news, check email, and make phone calls. We do whatever we can to be productive, because waiting feels like a waste.

Is it?

As the Psalmist describes it, waiting is not inactivity; rather, it is anticipation. Waiting requires courage and discipline to keep our focus on the promise ahead.

Waiting for the Lord isn't being stuck in a Saturday afternoon Costco line. It's more like reaching the top of the rollercoaster hill. We are suspended between what has been and what will be. Then the gravity shifts, and we are catapulted toward the new thing God is doing.

During Advent, may we wait for the Lord with the same breathless anticipation.

Prayer: Holy God, in this season of waiting, give us patience and renew our strength that we might perceive the new thing you are about to do through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Rev. Cassie Waits

Thursday, December 18, 2025

AWE!

Let all the earth fear the Lord;

Let all the inhabitants of the world stand in awe of Him. Psalm 33:8

In the presence of God, silence is the soul's highest form of expression. Awe is the condition of a spirit standing so impressed with the majesty of God that words cannot adequately describe. - A.W. Tozer

Fifty-seven years ago, the United States was in the throes of a race to put a man on the moon. At the age of 9, I was so enthralled I wanted to be an astronaut. In December 1968, the Apollo 8 mission was to be the first manned mission to orbit the moon. It was thrilling and scary as the dark side of the moon would prevent any communication between the spacecraft and Mission Control. On Christmas Eve, the astronauts orbited the moon. As the spacecraft left the dark of separation, the astronauts were greeted with an awesome view memorialized in a well-known photograph of the earth called 'Earthrise'.

Soon afterward, the astronauts were asked to say something appropriate to mark the historic occasion. Frank Borman and the two other astronauts read Genesis 1:1-10. In Borman's autobiography, *Countdown*, he explains why they read Scriptures: "There was one more impression we wanted to transmit; our feeling of closeness to the Creator of all things."

Imagine the awe— the closeness to God—these men must have felt seeing this view of earth in person. I feel the awe just seeing the photograph of Earth in the dark void. Did the shepherds feel that same breath-taking awe when they saw the Star of Bethlehem and came into the presence of the baby Jesus?

What can you do to experience this same feeling of awe - a closeness with our God? Start each day expecting to encounter awe in your walk with God whether it be a sunrise, a sunset, a full moon, goodness in people, generosity or love. And during this season of Advent, think about your God who came down to earth to be with you.

Prayer: Father, during this season of preparation, help me see and feel your awe every day. Amen.

Erroll Eckford

Friday, December 19, 2025

FOR THE BEAUTY OF THE EARTH

God saw all that he had made and it was very good. And there was evening, and there was morning—the sixth day. Genesis 1:31 (NIV)

Hanging on the wall of my home is a framed, ornately decorated copy of my favorite hymn, “For the Beauty of the Earth,” by Folliott S. Pierpoint. Every time that I stop to read and reflect upon it, I am reminded that God in all glory is before me, behind me, and beside me everywhere I am. The refrain of the hymn is a song of thanksgiving to God for the beauties and blessings, both physical and spiritual: the heavenly bodies of light and darkness, the flowering plants and trees, the variety of geological forms, human inspiration in music and visual arts, and the human love of family and friends.

How are we to use these blessings that God has provided? For help in this matter, I turn to the American Poet Laureate, Robert Frost. In his poem, “Choose Something Like a Star” (1916), Frost instructs us,

*...when at times the mob is swayed To carry praise or blame too far,
We may choose something like a star To stay our minds on and be staid.*

According to the poet, we will be the victims of negative events and thoughts some time in this life. The poet suggests turning to nature or any source of beauty for calming reflection. We can purposefully choose “to stay our minds on” one of God’s spiritual or physical gifts described in the hymn in the midst of our trials, tribulations, and supplications during the living of these days. Stop. Look around. Find one of God’s many blessings and stay your mind. Be thankful for God’s gifts.

Prayer: Dear Lord, help us to look beyond life’s distractions to see your handiwork in the beauties of the Earth, and may we see in your creation your blessed assurance that you walk beside us every day. Amen.

Nan Waters

Saturday, December 20, 2025

THE GIFT OF A CHILD

Now the birth of Jesus the Messiah took place in this way. When his mother Mary had been engaged to Joseph, but before they lived together, she was found to be pregnant from the Holy Spirit. Her husband Joseph, being a righteous man and unwilling to expose her to public disgrace, planned to divorce her quietly. But just when he had resolved to do this, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, “Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary as your wife, for the child conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. She will bear a son, and you are to name him Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins.” All this took place to fulfill what had been spoken by the Lord through the prophet: “Look, the virgin shall become pregnant and give birth to a son, and they shall name him Emmanuel,” which means, “God is with us.” When Joseph awoke from sleep, he did as the angel of the Lord commanded him; he took her as his wife but had no marital relations with her until she had given birth to a son, and he named him Jesus. Matthew 1:18-25

On Tuesday, December 6, 1969, 28 years ago, I gave birth to my first child—a daughter. I chose this date for my devotional because it was such a memorable and joyous day for me and I knew that scripture was about the birth of Jesus. On that day I was given such a wonderful gift from God, my child. The scripture verse states Mary was to conceive and give birth to the most wonderful of God’s gifts, the Christ child—Jesus—Emmanuel—“God with us”—our Savior.

I wonder if Mary felt all the emotions I did on that day—joy, excitement, fear (Motherhood can be that!), and anticipation of the future. I’m sure she did. She and Joseph knew the mission of their newborn son and I’m sure they were in awe of all that happened that day and as they watched Jesus grow.

Children are wonderful gifts from God and should at this time of year be excited about Christmas. But don’t let us, as Christians, forget to teach them the real meaning of Christmas—the birth of Christ. The child who, 33 years after his birth, gave his life on the cross to save us from our sins.

My daughter is now a mother herself; and because of the influence of Christians in her life she is raising her child in a Christian manner. My granddaughter knows who Jesus is and loves to sing “Jesus Loves Me.” Let us this day join with her: Yes, Jesus loves me, Yes Jesus loves me, Yes, Jesus loves me, For the Bible tells me so.

Prayer: Loving Father, thank you for your son, Jesus. Thank you for our children. Let us celebrate this season with joy, excitement, and reverence, ever mindful of your love for us. Amen

Jane Cofer

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