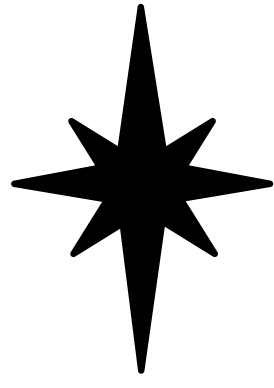


NAMES OF JESUS

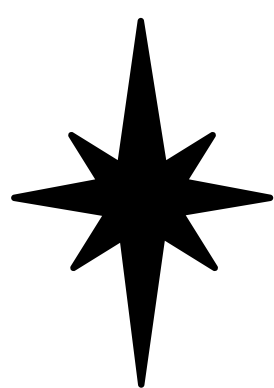


A HOPE ADVENT DEVOTIONAL

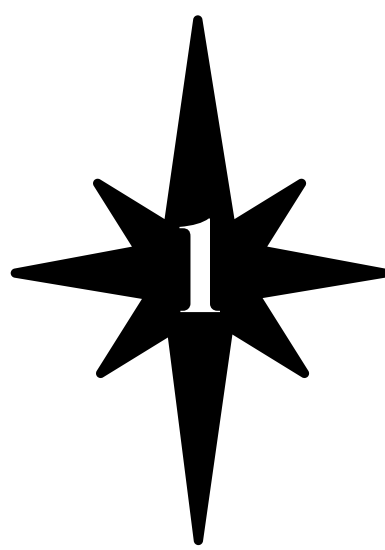
2022



THE SON
SAVIOR
CHRIST
THE WORD
IMMANUEL
WONDERFUL
COUNSELOR
MIGHTY GOD
ADVOCATE
PRINCE OF PEACE
REDEEMER
THE LORD
LAMB OF GOD
GOOD SHEPHERD
SERVANT
THE VINE
THE DELIVERER
KING OF KINGS
BRIDEGROOM
HIGH PRIEST
I AM
MEDIATOR
MESSIAH
JESUS
UNSPEAKABLE GIFT



JESUS



THE SON

*And we have seen and testify that the Father
has sent his Son to be the Savior of the world.*

1 John 4:14

God's Son. He's the reason we celebrate Advent and look forward to Christmas.

God could have sent someone else in some other capacity to do the work of saving humanity, but He chose to send His Son, knowing how significant that relationship would be for us as humans. The significance is not lost on me.

After struggling to get pregnant, we had our first child, a son. I will never forget the moment he arrived, because of the joy of a fulfilled dream, but also the fierce maternal instinct that kicked in the moment I heard his first cry. I was surprised by the desperation I felt for my baby to be in my arms and extreme joy I felt when I finally held him.

Shortly after, our dear friends, who had also walked alongside us in our fertility journey and who had themselves struggled to get pregnant, lost their long-awaited son when he was only 9 months old. It was sudden, unexpected, and tragic. We sat with them the night their son died and wept with them.

God sent His Son to be our Savior, and He knew what it would take to save us. In fact, His plan included the deepest joy and the most intense sorrow that could only come with having and then losing a son. His plan was both relatable to us as humans and showed His deep, passionate, desperate love for us. This Advent season, take a moment to consider that. You are loved with an intensity that you will only just begin to start understanding this side of eternity. And because Jesus rose from the grave, you can spend eternity with Him in that realized love.

Suzanne Anderson

JESUS



SAVIOR

*For unto you is born this day in the
city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord.*

Luke 2:11

One of my favorite TV series a few years back was the show 24. It's the (at times gruesome) story of a federal agent named Jack Bauer who has a really long day saving New York City from bad people who want to destroy the city. Typically, it's some form of dirty bomb, nuclear explosion or nerve poison.

To complicate matters, Jack has a daughter who makes a lot of bad decisions throughout the show that gets her into trouble and that typically also gets her mixed in with the bad guys. It takes the full 24 hours but, in the end, Jack ends up saving the city and his daughter whom he loves so very much despite her poor decisions and choices for getting into trouble.

In the bible the word Savior means someone who saves someone else from danger and destruction. To understand what it means for Jesus to be our Savior, you first have to understand your own desperate situation. Not only do we make poor decisions (much worse than Jack's daughter) that dishonor God but we don't even want to be saved. Hear that...you did not want to be saved from yourself and eternal separation from God. Ephesians 2:1-3

This is where Jesus comes in. He was the promised Savior from Old Testament times. I am the LORD your God, the Holy One of Israel, your Savior Isaiah 43:3.

Jesus, who had no sin became sin and suffered a horrific death on the cross, staying in the grave for three days he rose again, claiming victory over sin and death saving us from our own disobedience and ultimately from eternal death and saving us for a right relationship with God! For the son of man came to seek and save what was lost. Luke 19:10. Merry Christmas to you, right?

Stan Oawster

JESUS



CHRIST

*...but these are written so that you may believe
that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God,
and that by believing you may have life in his name.*

John 20:31

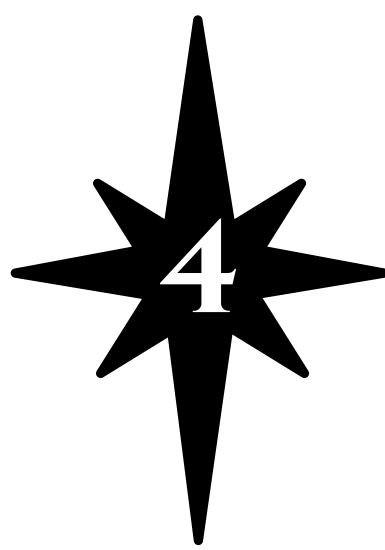
My favorite thing about “Christ” as a name of Jesus is that Christ is a translation of the Greek word for Messiah. Messiah, referring to the anointed one, the one who would redeem God's people, the one of whom the law and the prophets foretold, and the one whose kingdom would never end. That title carries such a richness of meaning in the Scripture of the Old Testament which was written in Hebrew and Aramaic. But Christ, Christ is in Greek. And that one fact makes me all teary at the mercy of God.

You see, I am not an ethnic Hebrew. I would bet a shiny dime that the vast majority of us reading this are not ethnic Hebrews. And for hundreds of years the redemption promised and offered by that anointed one was largely thought to apply only to ethnic Hebrews. But when Jesus came on the scene, God's plan for the fullness of time that was kept hidden for ages, that angels longed to look into, and that the prophets sought to understand -that great and profound mystery, was revealed. That plan was for me. And you. And people of every tribe, tongue, and nation. That by believing, we might have life in the name of Jesus Christ, and become adopted into the family of God.

If the family of God only ever included ethnic Hebrews, there would be no need to translate Messiah into Greek or any other language. There would be no need for the word Christ. So for me, the name of Christ is a precious gift, pointing to all that has been revealed about the Messiah, but also the fact that this Messiah, this Christ, threw wide open the gates to come out and bring us into his family.

Sarah Mishke

JESUS



THE WORD

*In the beginning was the Word, and the Word
was with God, and the Word was God.*

John 1:1

What comes to mind when you hear the word “beginning?” We probably tend to think of the start of something. Like a whistle to start a race, or the downbeat of a conductor’s baton to start the beginning of a concert. However, this word we see here in this verse is so much more than the start of something. It literally means “first cause” or “at first.” In other words, in this usage of beginning, John is telling his readers that Jesus was the first uncaused cause. He has always been and will always be. He is “The Word” of God that spoke everything into being.

I think this reading of this word helps us put the advent season into perspective.

This creation language that John is trying to get us to comprehend about not only who Jesus is as The Word, but who he was before time, makes Jesus taking on flesh that much more powerful. Jesus didn’t have a beginning; he made the beginning with his word. Yet he knew from the beginning that he would take on flesh to die for his image bearers, his creation, those who have a beginning.

We tend to think of birth as a beginning of new life, and this is true for Christ but only in that he began to be human when he was born. His being human allows those who put their faith in him and his finished work to have their own rebirth.

A start of a new life in Christ. A rebirth that the Messiah knew about from the beginning.

So this Christmas season, when your favorite song begins to play, or you begin to dig into your favorite hot-dish, let’s remember the one without a beginning, who gave us our beginning for his glory.

Brian Silver

JESUS



IMMANUEL

*“Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son,
and they shall call his name Immanuel”
(which means, God with us).*

Matthew 1:23

We could probably all think of a handful of scenes from a movie or book when the main character is plagued with doubt, and is rallied by a friend, a teammate, or someone who utters the words, “I’m with you.” Now imagine the impact of that being God Himself. God being with us is uniquely Christian. God being one who is so separate, so different, yet so close and so near.

*For this is what the high and exalted One says—
he who lives forever, whose name is holy:
“I live in a high and holy place,
but also with the one who is contrite and lowly in spirit,
to revive the spirit of the lowly
and to revive the heart of the contrite.*

Isaiah 57:15

I don’t know what you are facing today. What I do know though, is because you are human, that there is some aspect that is constantly fearful of being alone, forgotten, unseen. God is with you. Right now where you are. How would your day be different today if you had a constant awareness of and belief in God being with you?

Jon Neal

JESUS



WONDERFUL

*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.*

Isaiah 9:6

I've been realizing that I describe people and things as "wonderful" in conversations all the time. I generally consider it as being interchangeable with descriptors like "pleasant" or "enjoyable." The meaning of the word has become watered down in my mind because of how commonly I use it.

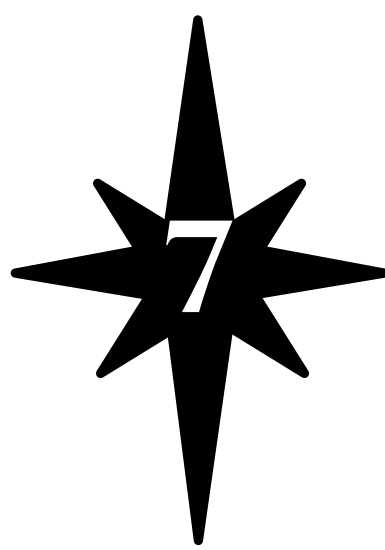
When Isaiah spoke of the coming messiah as a wonderful counselor, I can't help but think that description carried a whole lot more weight with the Israelites than the way that I use it most days. Isaiah's prophecy gave the people of God a hope they so desperately needed. A hope for someone to listen to them, and to care about what they hear.

Fast-forward thousands of years to us today, and the hope of the Israelites has become our reality. Jesus, the Messiah, has come to be our wonderful counselor! Hallelujah! We can trust Him to listen to our struggles, and to care deeply about the things we feel and experience. Jesus' wisdom is beyond comprehension, and his love is all-encompassing. Jesus' kind of wonderful is awe-inspiring, as He is perfect in every way.

This advent season, may we fix our eyes on Jesus, our wonderful counselor. And as we consider who He is and what He has done for us, may we come away filled with wonder!

Logan Moore

JESUS



COUNSELOR

*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.*

Isaiah 9:6

Counselor. What better counselor do we have than Jesus? I can think of no one better to bring my deep anguish, worries, and fears. I can think of no one better than Christ to pour my heart out to and sit within my fears and ask for wisdom and advice from. Isaiah is a book about Israel's continued sin and rebellion and warning of judgment and the wrath that is to come and that is deserved. Yet, Isaiah shares the hope and Grace that is to come. A child that will be brought into the world to save them and redeem them.

Counselor. This word is also bigger than just your typical psychologist. Jesus counsels and leads us to our salvation. Jesus' counsel is necessary in our relationship with him and allows us to draw near to him. Let's reflect on this word and remember that we were given the ultimate gift of life, a sweet precious, perfect baby born into a sinful, cruel world, who came to counsel us to his glory and grace. Rejected by his heavenly father so we may know, love, and be loved by him.

As I have struggled with many mental health issues I am thankful I have the ultimate counselor to that I can drop to my knees and cry out. The ultimate counselor who not only hears my struggles and sufferings but leads me to a deep belonging, love, and understanding that I am a child in Christ who was specifically called out and chosen. He not only hears my heart but knows me deeper than I or anyone else will ever know me. Jesus gives us the Grace that we do not deserve. He gives us the light and hope that we long for, and only he can fill. This Christmas, I am reflecting on my great counselor, physician, Mighty God, and Prince of Peace. Who I am in him and how I can share this light with my community.

Brita Johnson

JESUS



MIGHTY GOD

*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.*

Isaiah 9:6

Jesus is Mighty God, all-powerful, and the one true God. There are many false gods in this world that any of us could possibly chase and serve. The ones that quickly come to my mind are politics, career, wealth, knowledge, and even self-image. Living in such a loud, noisy world that distracts us from the truth, idolatry can easily take hold and have a certain power over us.

*My favorite verses come from Colossians 1:16-17,
For in him all things were created: things in heaven
and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones
or powers or rulers or authorities; all things have been created
through him and for him. He is before all things,
and in all things hold together.*

God is powerful enough to literally create heaven and earth, and He is also more powerful than politics, cultural wars, and my personal struggles. What a relief that we have a Mighty God who is bigger than all these things and that we can depend on Him!

*I am also reminded of Zephaniah 3:17,
The Lord your God is with you, the Mighty Warrior who saves,
He will take great delight in you; in his love he will no longer
rebuke you, but will rejoice over you with singing.*

I often find it overwhelming to reconcile that the all-powerful Creator not only saved me from my sins, but somehow also takes great delight in me and rejoices over me. This advent season, may we be reminded that a Mighty God is with us – who is all powerful, who saves, and who deeply loves us.

Minn Rose

JESUS



ADVOCATE

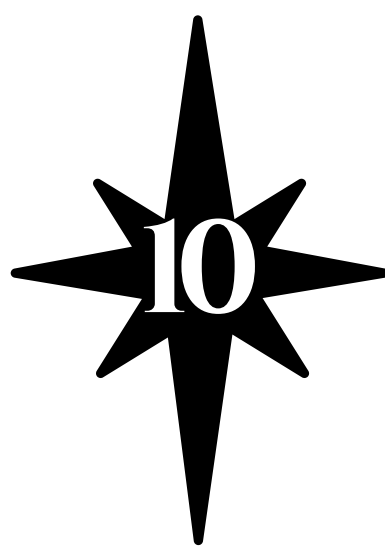
My little children, I am writing these things to you so that you may not sin. But if anyone does sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous.

1 John 2:1

Advocate. What a word. I have always associated the word “advocate” with standing up for the little guys. Well our Savior indeed does that. We are all the little guys, wrestling with sin in our lives. Without hope of making it on our own. And Jesus stands up for us all. So much so He stands up in our place. He takes the shame, the guilt, the insults, the punishment, and the pain. We are constantly sinning and Jesus is our constant Advocate. Constantly standing up for us, constantly interceding with the Father on our behalf. Not because He can look at our good deeds or right motivations, for all of that is tainted. But because the power of the cross covers every area of our lives, every inch of our character. The power of the cross can not be diminished by us and our sin. Our Advocate knows that the cross was the ultimate act, a final act. Our Advocate became a little guy Himself to take our punishment and give us His righteousness. Because of Him we have a chance. Because of Him we are saved. It is finished. Our Advocate has WON.

Sarah Nelson

JESUS



PRINCE OF PEACE

*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.
Isaiah 9:6*

When I was in London with my family earlier this year, we spent some time touring a number of the museums and historical exhibits in the city. Spend any amount of time in those places, and you're reminded of just how much war there has been through modern human history: wars over territory, wars for independence, wars for democracy, wars for a certain monarch's right to reign over a country. There seems to be something in our nature that's inclined toward conflict: if my side is stronger than yours, I win the right to decide how things will work going forward — or until your side, or some other entity, is strong enough to do something about it.

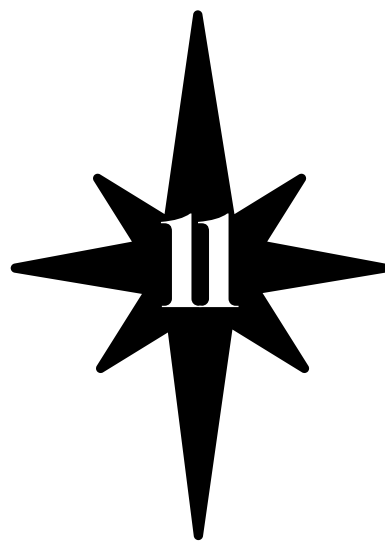
Contrast that with the final name Jesus is given in Isaiah 9:6 — “the Prince of Peace.” We've already heard earlier in the verse that the government will be upon his shoulder, and we're told in Isaiah 9:7 that there will be no end to the increase of his government and of peace. Jesus' reign is about an offensive of peace; he expands his empire by extending his grace further and further throughout the world. He did not take his throne through strength, but by an act of submission; he made himself a perfect sacrifice on our behalf, and God raised him up to show the sacrifice worked.

How did it work? By bringing us peace with God. The Hebrew word Isaiah uses here is shalom, which conveys peace on a deeper level than we typically think of it. It's not just the absence of conflict; it's a sense of wholeness or completeness. When Isaiah calls Jesus the Prince of Peace, he's pointing toward a Messiah who brings those who were enemies of God into perfect, complete reconciliation with their Creator. We have peace with God because we are justified by faith, and gain access to grace that allows us to stand and boast in the hope of God's glory (Romans 5:1-2).

Jesus' birth at Christmas, his death on Good Friday and his resurrection on Easter Sunday represents the in-breaking of the Kingdom of God. It will not stop advancing until Christ returns to trample sin and death, and those who are in Christ will live in perfect peace with God forever. Though we live in a world marred by conflict and strife now, we can rejoice this Christmas in confidence that the reign of our Prince of Peace cannot and will not be stopped.

Ben Goessling

JESUS



REDEEMER

Thus says the LORD, your Redeemer, who formed you from the womb: "I am the LORD, who made all things, who alone stretched out the heavens, who spread out the earth by myself."

Isaiah 44:24

For many, the holidays are a time to enjoy traditions, good food, and time with family and friends. Seeing those first flurries of snow reminds us of the good things to come. It's magical. Beautiful.

For others, those first few flurries seem much more like flecks of ash. They remind them of the smoldering embers of a once-joyful season that's now long gone and barely a memory. They remind them of broken families or a painful past. It can seem that losing the season all together might just be easier. How could something so broken be made new?

Jesus, like a warm coat in the cold weather, envelopes us with his love. He does not shame us in our hurt or distance himself from broken lives. In fact, some of God's most profound works occur in his redemption of brokenness and pain. The God who stretched out the heavens is working, not in spite of our pain and brokenness, but through it. Though we often assume our pain is just useless baggage that weighs us down, perhaps it is in those cracks where God's power to make new and redeem is displayed most clearly. Christ did not die for part of you and your story, he died for all of it; he took on all of it to invite you into his family. "This is what he wanted to do, and it gave him great pleasure" (Ephesians 1:5 NLT).

What pain and hurt do you withhold from Jesus? Do you believe in his gentle power to restore and redeem what you have long given up on?

Nolan Bauer

JESUS



THE LORD

For “everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.”

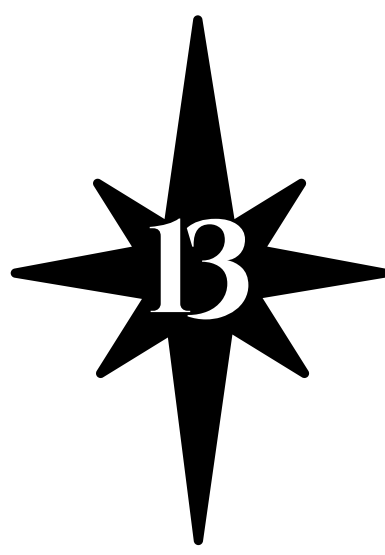
Romans 10:13

When I reflect on my “love languages,” and particularly how they play out when I express love, I realize that one of my favorite ways to express love is to give gifts. Therefore, the Advent season can be one that is very joyful for me. I love to take time to truly consider the person I am giving a gift to: What do they like? What would bless them? What would show them how much I care? However, I always like to make sure that after all the consideration and thoughtfulness that I’ve put into giving them a gift, they know it was from me. So, I sign my name, From: Paul. Now this might not be the case for you when you give a gift, but I know that somewhere, deep in my heart, I want them to receive my gift and say, “Wow, Paul is really thoughtful.” In essence, I want to make a name for myself. I want to have a greater reputation in their eyes.

This is why this passage speaks to me and my reputation-seeking heart in the Advent season. God sends his Son so that we can call upon his name and be saved. This is God’s ultimate gift to us - the gift of freedom from endlessly trying to make a better name for ourselves with our own works, and instead giving us a Savior so that we can call upon his name, receive his reputation of righteousness, and enjoy true rest from all our striving.

Paul Stiver

JESUS



LAMB OF GOD

*The next day he saw Jesus coming toward him, and said,
"Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!"*

John 1:29

We all have driven past a car accident where we "just can't look away." We are wired for constant threat assessment so we can't really help being drawn into accidents.

The staring we do demonstrates our bodies' preparedness for a possible fight, flight, or freeze response. "Rubbernecking" is a great word to describe the gawking that happens when many people drive past accidents.

In a broken world it is not surprising that we don't have a similar common experience related to doing a double take with pleasant things. We have words like tantalize or enrapture that touch on the idea but they don't get much use.

In the Gospels we see John the Baptist telling folks to do a bit of rubbernecking. When he sees Jesus, John cries out "Behold the Lamb of God, who takes away the sins of the world!" John understood that when Jesus shows up, everything changes. Our heart, soul, mind, and strength are to turn wholly to him. We rubberneck to marvel at the love, grace and mercy of the Lamb.

Jesus is the anti-accident, anti-threat that our souls were made to behold. Rather than stimulating a fight, flight, freeze response, the Lamb of God creates peace, comfort, and joy as we recognize the love and acceptance we receive.

This Christmas do a double-take at the Lamb of God and consider all that he has done. He is worthy to behold. Revelation 5 gives a glimpse of the eternal rubbernecking that the saints and angels will share as they are transfixed by the Lamb of God:

"Then I looked and heard the voice of many angels, numbering thousands upon thousands, and ten thousand times ten thousand. They encircled the throne and the living creatures and the elders. In a loud voice they sang: "Worthy is the Lamb, who was slain, to receive power and wealth and wisdom and strength and honor and glory and praise!" Then I heard every creature in heaven and on earth and under the earth and on the sea, and all that is in them, singing: "To him who sits on the throne and to the Lamb be praise and honor and glory and power, for ever and ever!"

Aaron Robertson

JESUS



GOOD SHEPHERD

*I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd
lays down his life for the sheep.*

John 10:11

What is a shepherd? Chances are, you and I didn't grow up closely observing someone who tends and guides sheep. But is that all a shepherd does? Can we learn anything from this seemingly archaic occupation? If Jesus calls himself the "good shepherd," what actually makes a shepherd 'good?'

Selflessness.

The eyes of the shepherd are on the flock. The flock's provision, guidance, and safety are the highest concerns of the shepherd. In Psalm 23 we observe the Lord as a shepherd who, in the words of David, "makes me lie down in green pastures, and leads me beside still waters" (Ps. 23:2). God provides rest and refreshment for his flock. Without a guide and a sense of safety, sheep will not lie down to rest. They are far too paranoid for that. Sheep will only lie down to rest when they are free from fear. I can observe this in my life as well. I don't rest because I'm fearful that I'm not doing enough for God, when in reality, I'm trying to find rest in what I'm accomplishing rather than what God has already done.

Furthermore, in verse 3 it says "He restores my soul." Jesus, as the good shepherd did just that. By his life, death, and resurrection, Jesus Christ brought our dead souls to life. We can rest from the constant burden of feeling like we have to measure up because Christ paid the penalty we deserved. He is the Good Shepherd who provides, guides, and gives us rest. The one who, in total selflessness, "laid down his life for the sheep."

Mike Friedman

JESUS



SERVANT

*“...but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant,
being born in the likeness of men.”*

Philippians 2:7

The first chapter of Colossians pulls back the curtain so we might glimpse the true majesty of Jesus.

It is “by [Jesus] all things were created; things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things were created for him and by him.” (Col. 1:16.) Jesus, “the image of the invisible God,” is “before all things, and in [Jesus] all things hold together.” (Col. 1:15, 17).

All things. Everything. Complete and total supremacy over every inch of the cosmos. From before time, in every time, and through time everlasting, forever and ever. There was and is nothing on earth and in the heavenly realms beyond the reach and authority and power of Jesus. Nothing!

Yet Jesus came to us as a Servant.

What does it tell us about Jesus that he came not to be served, but to serve? That He came to walk in the streets of Israel, dirty his hands, and restore sight for the blind? That He came to heal the sick and eat with sinners? That He came to dwell with us, without a place to lay his head or a coin in his pocket? That Jesus came ultimately to show us the full extent of his love in suffering and emptying himself unto death?

Jesus as Servant is a loud and beautiful proclamation of God’s great love to us this Christmas! May it grip our hearts in awe that our God came to serve and save us when we least deserved it. May we, the people of Hope, behold King Jesus in this season and wonder at him in all of his authority, lowering himself to be born as a baby boy in the form of a Servant.

Bryan Freeman



*I am the vine; you are the branches. Whoever abides in me
and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit,
for apart from me you can do nothing.*

John 15:5

“If it’s in the root, it’s in the shoot.” I have no idea where my mom heard this phrase initially, but clearly it impacted her enough for her to repeat it--often--to me as I grew up.

I am not an adept gardener. I’d like to think I’ve learned a thing or two in the few years I’ve cared for the small space cut into my backyard (I mean, I usually get to eat something...eventually...), but that’s certainly come from trial and error--and the occasional Google search. I know that if I just took the time to read the books, go to the workshops, and connect with those who have the experience and knowledge, my garden would be much more fruitful. But I’m busy, and don’t want to admit what I don’t know, so each year passes by without substantial change. My roots aren’t great, so my shoots (or in this case, brussel sprouts!) are equally lackluster.

In John 15:5 (NIV) Jesus says that “I am the vine; you are the branches. If you remain in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing.” Jesus is highlighting here the importance of His followers being well rooted in that which is most important--Him! Even though I know how vital this is (much like fertilizing my garden), it’s often easy to neglect this truth in the midst of my daily busyness and distractions--let alone when they seem to be amplified over the holiday season. I don’t know about you, but my roots get a bit parched, and my shoot starts to look pretty straggly come mid-December.

So what does it look like for your roots to be refreshed this year? Are you viewing Jesus as your most life-giving source above and beyond the parties, to-do lists, and traditions? Take some time to remain in Jesus--the healthiest Vine, the strongest root--today. I’m praying for your advent fruit to be a reflection of His work in and through you!

Olivia Disselkamp

JESUS



THE DELIVERER

*And in this way all Israel will be saved, as it is written,
“The Deliverer will come from Zion, he will banish
ungodliness from Jacob...”*

Romans 11:26

Toy Story 3 contains one of the more terrifying pictures of the human predicament in a scene where Woody and the gang are trapped on a conveyor belt heading straight into a fiery furnace. All resources and attempts for escape have already been spent, and for the first time in the series, our toy heroes resign to their fate and link arms while they are carried toward inevitable destruction. But then, something supernatural happens. The heavens tear open and a giant claw of rescue descends from above collectively scooping our heroes out of the furnace and gently placing them onto solid ground. The sigh of relief in light of their rescue binds the group together in love and even brings about a spontaneous confession from Mr. Potato Head.

This is a cartoon picture of our Deliverer. We hear he will come out of Zion, which we might label “Mount Supernatural” based on Isaiah 2 and Hebrews 12 – it’s a wonderful mountain, built by a symphony of joyous song (think Red Rocks Amphitheater with a lineup of your favorite bands and unending buffet for you to enjoy with people you like).

In the Scriptures, Zion is contrasted with Mount Sinai – Moses’ mountain of self-deliverance and the unending list of failures in its wake. It’s only after our efforts to deliver ourselves have been frustrated and the conveyor belt of time plunges forward without mercy – only then – are we ready to receive deliverance from above. After Sinai, there is Zion. After darkness, there is light.

Jesus, the rescuing claw of God, tore the heavens open when he was baptized. Later, he himself would be torn open on a cross on a mountain (Mount Zion) for our deliverance. In the light of his grace, our ungodliness is banished...and maybe we even begin to resemble Mr. Potato Head, freely confessing our sins in the presence of our Deliverer.

Davis Johnson

JESUS



KING OF KINGS

*They will make war on the Lamb, and the Lamb
will conquer them, for he is Lord of lords and King of kings,
and those with him are called and chosen and faithful.”*

Revelation 17:14

Do you hear the strength in this passage? Strength in a Lamb that will conquer the war made upon him (what?!). Strength in the Lord with a capital L and King with a capital K (insert mic drop).

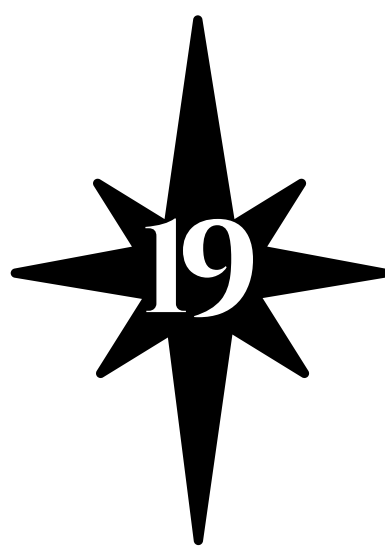
Do you have any memories of hearing the Hallelujah Chorus from Handel's Messiah? Maybe you, like me, have had the opportunity to sing this classic as part of a choir. It starts with lots of "hallelujahs" and "for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth". And then "the kingdom of this world; is become the kingdom of our Lord and of His Christ!" And "and he shall reign for ever and ever" and a few more "hallelujahs". It is glorious.

Then comes my favorite part - "King of kings and Lord of lords" on repeat, combined with "for ever" and more "hallelujahs". First climbing up the scale and then proclaimed very majestically and with so much power. Then there's a giant rest for everyone. A silent beat where every voice and every instrument pauses. It literally forces you to wait and reflect on the powerful words you just heard (or sang!).

Will you wait and reflect on our King of kings with me this Advent season? I don't want us to miss the strength of this title that our God holds. And then, after much reflection and awe, be sure to proclaim one final: "Hallelujah" altogether!

Kelly Zuehlke

JESUS



BRIDEGROOM

*And Jesus said to them, “Can the wedding guests
mourn as long as the bridegroom is with them?
The days will come when the bridegroom is taken
away from them, and then they will fast.*

Matthew 9:15

The longer I walk the journey of the Christian faith the more I realize the need to hold joy and sorrow in tension with one another. This life brings seasons. King Solomon suggests that there is season for everything. A time to cry and a time to laugh. A time to grieve and a time to dance (Ecclesiastes 3:1,4). This is and always has been the human experience. It’s the experience of the Christian also.

The gospel provides no guarantees of a pain free life. Some days feel more like Good Friday than Easter Sunday, more like death than they do like life. The reality we live in as Christians is that we have reason for joy in all seasons because the perfect Bridegroom took on flesh to give us life and life to the full (John 10:10). The Psalmist in Psalm 126: 5-6 writes “Those who plant in tears will harvest with shouts of joy. They weep as they go to plant their seed, but they sing as they return with the harvest.”

Friends, pain and joy can be held in tension. Perhaps fast later – maybe next week, tomorrow or the moment that follows this one – in order to celebrate with the Bridegroom now. And in this Christmas season, we have a Bridegroom that has brought us life and given us many reasons to celebrate.

Leah Lindstrom

JESUS



HIGH PRIEST

*Since then we have a great high priest who has passed
through the heavens, Jesus, the Son of God,
let us hold fast our confession.*

Hebrews 4:14

Do you ever have one of those moments reading the Bible where you just stop and scratch your head? That happened to me while reading through Leviticus 16. God gives instructions concerning the Day of Atonement to Aaron, the high priest. On this one day each year, he is to make a sacrifice for all the people and enter the Most Holy Place in order to atone for the sins of (1) the people of Israel, (2) himself, and (3) the Most Holy Place and the tent of meeting. That last part (Lev. 16:16) is where I paused and read the verse again...and then again. The high priest was to make atonement for the Most Holy Place... What? Why did a place so holy that if anyone entered it without proper instruction, they would be struck dead, need atoning for?

Further along in verse 16, it explains that the rebellion and sins of the people had contaminated the Most Holy Place. Sin is so infectious that not even the holiest of holies could remain unscathed. Every tear that has ever fallen, every ache you've felt in your heart, every bout of panic, every single cell that has betrayed your own body, every bad, sad, and mad moment you've experienced is a result of our world tainted by sin.

So...what does all of this have to do with Christmas? Well, we were given the gift of all gifts! Hebrews 4:14 calls Jesus our "great high priest." It is through the perfect and final work of our great high priest, who himself became the sacrifice, that he has reconciled us to himself. Every ache of our broken realities, every harmful word we've said or hurtful thing we've done, our great high priest has triumphed over and defeated it. And so, while we wait for the full renewal of all things, we can confidently hold fast to the truth that the work has already been finished by Jesus, our great high priest. We have been forgiven. Sin and its effects, even death, do not get the last word!

Sadie Berg

JESUS



I AM

*Jesus said to them, "Truly, truly, I say to you,
before Abraham was, I am."*

John 8:58

While on vacation a number of years ago, I met a man named Jack. He was around 75 years old, and by a random set of circumstances, my wife and I found ourselves being driven around by him in his minivan in eastern Canada. A little sketchy, I'll admit, but alas...while chatting with him, he started telling us stories. Stories that included being an underwater welder for container ships. And he was a veteran of multiple wars. And he had climbed Mt. Everest 4 times. The list of accomplishments and adventures seemed to flow out of his mouth, not in a prideful way, but in the same way one might talk about a random Tuesday at work. It was nearly unbelievable, and yet, we had no reason not to believe him.

Similarly, in John chapter 8, we see Jesus making a tremendous, almost unbelievable claim. Not only is Jesus claiming to have existed before Abraham, he is claiming the name of I Am. The very same name that God gives himself in Exodus 3:14. Jesus is claiming to be God, the one who is before all things, the one who comes after, the one who does not change, the one who is "I Am." No wonder in the very next verse in John, the religious leaders who heard Jesus' words picked up stones to stone him. It was not lost on them what Jesus was claiming. That he was God. And may that not be lost on us this Christmas season. Jesus, being fully God, came down from heaven, born as a baby boy. This is the incarnation. This is Emmanuel - "God with us." And may we, instead of picking up stones, may we stand in awe and in belief that the Great I Am has come into the world, not to condemn it, but to save it.

Jordan Anderson

JESUS



MEDIATOR

*For there is one God, and there is one mediator
between God and men, the man Christ Jesus
1 Timothy 2:5*

The Old Testament story of Job can be confusing. Job was a man who God himself describes as “blameless and upright, a man who fears God and shuns evil.” God even went as far as to say that there is one else like Job on the Earth. And yet, God allowed Job to experience intense suffering. Not just, the ‘I had a bad day and now I don’t have time to relax and get eight hours of sleep’ kind of suffering. Job’s suffering was the ‘everything I own got destroyed, all my children died, and my body is wracked with painful sores I scrape with broken pottery’ kind of suffering. Truly, this human life can’t get much worse than that.

There are many chapters devoted to dialogue between Job and his friends as they try to make sense of this situation. As a group, they can’t wrap their heads around the idea that God is just, Job was blameless, and yet somehow Job still suffered immensely. To these men, these three facts couldn’t live in tension, and so a debate began between them. Which of these three facts isn’t true?

Job’s friends insist that he must have sinned to deserve such punishment. Job denies having sinned in such a way that this type of punishment was warranted. After many exhausting and frustrating exchanges between the men, God entered the discussion in a big way asking,

*“Who is this that obscures my plans
with words without knowledge? Job 38:2 (NIV)*

God then goes on to ask over 140 questions, none of which Job actually answers.

God poses these questions to highlight to Job that His wisdom and plan stretches further than Job can possibly fathom. When Job does dare to speak he says,

*“I know that you can do all things no purpose of yours can be thwarted.
You asked, ‘Who is this that obscures my plans without knowledge?’
Surely I spoke of things I did not understand things too wonderful for me to
know. Job 42:2-3 (NIV)*



Mediator continued...

Why talk about Job at Christmas? In the midst of his desperation and suffering Job cries out to be heard by God. In chapter nine Job says,

If only there were someone to mediate between us someone to bring us together, someone to remove God's rod from me, so that his terror would frighten me no more. Then I would speak up without fear of him, but as it now stands with me, I cannot. Job 9:33-35 (NIV)

On that first Christmas morning a mediator was born. He came into the world to do what Job wanted. On the cross, Jesus removed God's rod from us and has allowed us to draw near to God without fear.

*For there is one God and one mediator between God and mankind, the man Christ Jesus,
1 Timothy 2:5 (NIV)*

In the midst of your suffering and the frustrations of this world, remember, you have a God who deeply loves you. In fact, He loves you so dearly, that he sent His only son to die as that mediator between us and Himself.

Naty Severson

JESUS



MESSIAH

*He first found his own brother Simon and said to him,
“We have found the Messiah” (which means Christ).*

John 1:41

In Scripture, (Simon) Peter has a reputation for being the impulsive one. He often put his foot in his mouth when answering Jesus or making decisions about what to do next. But in this passage, it's Peter's brother Andrew who declares after just one day with Jesus that “we have found the messiah”. What faith!

In my (Andy) life, I am sometimes spontaneous, and sometimes analytical. I definitely put my foot in my mouth too. But I pray for faith to see Jesus in my everyday and like Andrew declare with confidence that i have found my savior.

And the boldness to share that discovery with others.

Have you seen Jesus today? Who do you want to tell?

Andy and Coral Karsky

JESUS



JESUS

*She will bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus,
for he will save his people from their sins. Matthew 1:21*

The arrival of a rival?

In Luke 2, an angel tells a group of shepherds the good news that a savior has been born to them. Additionally, Magi travel to Jerusalem in Judea to present gifts to the newborn king (Matt. 2:1-12).

This introduces a problem because Rome already had a Savior and Judea already a king. Caesar Augustus (Luke 2:1-3) was not only the Roman Emperor; he was also considered “savior of the world.” And Herod the Great (Luke 1:5) was the local king of Judea.

The relationship between the two leaders was one of patron-client. Caesar Augustus (patron) supported Herod the Great (client) both economically and militarily. In return, Herod was expected to remain loyal to and share financial tributes with Rome. In their ideal world, Caesar Augustus would be rewarded with peace and Herod with sovereignty.

Enter Jesus, proclaimed Savior and King. Was this the arrival of a rival?

Let's compare.

Caesar and Herod sought peace; Jesus brought peace.

Their glory was in military might; His glory was in his matchless light.

Their crowns suffered due to human fragility; His crown secured through the cross's humility.

They saved themselves through assassinations; He saved others through his own crucifixion.

They crucified with scorn and shame; He was crucified, scorning its shame.

They fought enemies foreign and domestic; He fought sin and triumphed majestic.

They raised a temple to lift up Augustus; He raised a temple, his body, to lift up us.

Their kingdoms secured allegiance to the throne; His kingdom secured by a rolled away stone.

They spread great Roman tradition; He shared the Great Commission.

They lived, died, and were memorialized; He lived, died, and was resurrected.

Was this the arrival of a rival? No.

Herod was considered Great and Caesar Augustus even Greater.

But it's not even close, Jesus Christ is the Greatest.

JESUS



UNSPEAKABLE GIFT

Thanks be to God for his indescribable gift!

~ The Apostle Paul in 2 Corinthians 9:15

Merry Christmas!

As long as I can remember, Christmas day has been a time filled with joy, family, food and the sharing of gifts. As a young child, I could hardly sleep the night before with all the wonder and excitement that Christmas would bring, especially the opening of all those packages beneath the tree. The innocence of my youth coupled with the absolute joy of the adults in my life who were thrilled to see my pleasure in opening their gifts is something I will always remember.

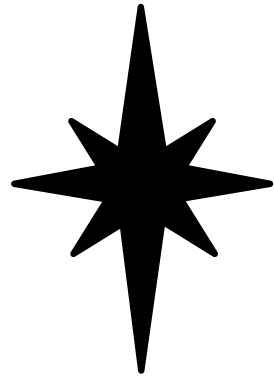
As I have gotten older, I am no longer filled with the wonder and joy of a small child on Christmas. And, as I now have grandchildren, those emotions are renewed in my heart as I watch them open their gifts with the wonder and awe of a small child. Now, my heart swells and is tickled with pure joy in giving gifts and seeing their pleasure! Yes, I am serving them by buying them gifts, but I am the one who really gets the joy. It is worth every penny to be the one who brings such pleasure to my grandkids.

And, that is exactly why we celebrate this day. Our heavenly Father is filled with incredible joy for being the Giver of the most ultimate gift ever given – the sending of His Son, our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. He delights in watching his children open this “indescribable gift” and seeing our pleasure.

So, on this Christmas Day, take a few minutes to simply reflect on this Gift, and do nothing more than be pleased, filled with wonder and thankful to the One who loves us deeply and is tickled with joy to see our happiness!

Have an amazing Christmas,

Pastor Steve Treichler



THE SON
SAVIOR
CHRIST
THE WORD
IMMANUEL
WONDERFUL
COUNSELOR
MIGHTY GOD
ADVOCATE
PRINCE OF PEACE
REDEEMER
THE LORD
LAMB OF GOD
GOOD SHEPHERD
SERVANT
THE VINE
THE DELIVERER
KING OF KINGS
BRIDEGROOM
HIGH PRIEST
I AM
MEDIATOR
MESSIAH
JESUS
UNSPEAKABLE GIFT

