

Devotions followed by Service – Christmas Eve 2025

Devotion for Genesis 3:1-15

Is it alright? Is it alright if I don't talk about what is going out there, outside of these walls, out there in the world? Is that alright? Instead, let's talk about something closer to home.

What do you latch on to? What do you latch on to when you feel stressed? What do you latch on to when you feel lonely, forgotten? What do you latch on to when you feel tired and overwhelmed? What do you latch on to when you feel empty? What do you latch on to when you feel wrong, dirty, guilty, ashamed? What do you latch on to when you want better? What do you latch on to? I think we'd rather talk about what's going on out there, wouldn't we?

What do we latch on to? We might latch on to a screen, a game, news that feels important. We might latch on to a cookie, a drink, a brownie, a puff. We might latch on to our job, or our weekend fun, or our bucket list. We might latch on getting more, having more, doing more; getting better, having better, doing better. What do you latch on to?

Sometimes what we latch on to could be good; sometimes what we latch on to is never good. Sometimes what we latch on to is like a placebo, a sugar pill; it makes us feel better but it doesn't really fix anything. Sometimes what we latch on to might makes us feel better for a while, but then we find out it's a fake, a fraud, a liar, a pretender - and it puts us in a worse place than we were before.

You might be thinking: why can't we talk about something, somebody else? We go back to our first parents, Adam and Eve. Life was so good for them; living in the Garden of Eden, they were living in Paradise. They had people, purpose, paradise - together with each other, together with God.

But someone didn't like that. He didn't like Adam and Eve together with each other and together with God. So he went oftener Adam and Eve's connection with God. He questioned and he twisted truth and he lied to make God look like the bad guy, to turn Adam and Eve in on themselves, away from God. And Adam and Eve fell for it. They let go of God and they latched on the devil's lies; they let go of God's Word and latched on to the fruit they weren't supposed to eat. They thought they could do better for themselves without God. And what did it get them?

What happens when we latch on to a lie? When we latch on to something or someone that is supposed to make life better for us, when reality hits and we find out it doesn't make life better for us, what happens? Innocence turns to shame. Hope turns to

fear. We turn dumb and think we can hide from God and each other. We blame each other and make excuses for ourselves.

It would be easier to talk about what's going on out there, wouldn't it? Except here we have an answer. Not another placebo, not another lie, not another pretender. Here we have Jesus. When Adam and Eve were hit with the reality of what they had done to themselves by latching on the lie, God stepped in with a promise - "I will put enmity." God would step in and break the devil's hold on them. God would step in and break their hold on the devil's lies. We don't have to live hooked on placebos; we don't have to live hooked on lies and fakes and frauds. Just as God promised, he stepped in. He stepped in with Jesus to crush the lying Serpent's head and set us free.

Devotion for Isaiah 7 and 9

Ahaz, king of Judah and Jerusalem, was in trouble. The kings of Israel and Syria were warring against him. Ahaz knew he needed help, and God offered him help. But Ahaz didn't want God's help because Ahaz didn't want to listen to God or have anything to do with God. So Ahaz reached out and latched on to Tiglath Pilezer and the Assyrians for help and for hope. But what did the Assyrian armies do? They didn't just roll over Syria and Israel, they kept on rolling over the cities and villages of Judah. Ahaz chose the wrong help and hope and it cost him.

Ever realize you made the wrong choice for help and for hope? It hurts, doesn't it? It can make for a dark, dark time. But for those dark times, God has light and hope. For our dark and impossible times, God steps in for us with his impossible Child.

When I call Jesus an impossible child, that doesn't sound right, does it? It sounds as if Jesus were impossible to parent, impossible to raise, impossible Instead, here's how God stepped in with his impossible Child - he brought his eternal Son into the world as a baby born of a virgin - impossible. But it's not just that Jesus is impossible, Jesus did and he does the impossible. Jesus took the kingdom Ahaz had lost, the kingdom the Assyrians had steam-rolled, the kingdom that sin and Satan had rotted ... Jesus took that kingdom and established a new kingdom.

Not another kingdom led by fools, not another kingdom where people like you and me are stepped on and squeezed, not another kingdom that would rot from the inside or get steam-rolled from the outside. That's not the kingdom or the life God has for us. But this is the kingdom God has for Jesus; this is the life Jesus has for you - a kingdom of justice and righteousness that will last forever; a kingdom of peace where you get to enjoy life made right for you as the people of God; a kingdom, a life where you see Jesus and you light up - why? Because you have the Wonderful Counselor, the Mighty God, the Everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace looking out for you! Sounds impossible, doesn't it? The zeal of the LORD Almighty will accomplish this!

Devotion for Isaiah 11

I don't know what in our next lesson sounds more unlikely, more impossible. I don't know what sounds better. The more Isaiah shows me Jesus and what Jesus will do for us, the more I wow!

Imagine yourself on trial before God. You know what he has seen; you know what he has heard. He's seen those times you refused his Word and Promise because it didn't fit what you wanted. He's heard those times you latched onto the devil's lies because they fit what you wanted. He's seen and he's heard you ignoring him so you could latch on to the stuff and the life of this world. He's seen and he's heard. But he doesn't judge you based on what he's seen and heard of you. Instead, he judges for you. He applies his right life and judges you right. How can he do that? We leave the manger and we go to the cross. There we see our sin against God judged; there we see our latching on to the life of this world paid for. Then we go to Easter and what do we see and hear? We see Jesus smile, and we hear Jesus promise forgiveness and peace. Peace with God. Peace with each other. Peace all around - life the way it's supposed to be.

We might think - unlikely; we might think - impossible. But some day we will get to live peace made perfect - with Jesus.

Christmas Eve 2025 Candlelight Service

God Stepped In

*In the spirit of the evening,
please be quieted when the music begins.*

PRELUDE

Piano and Organ

Christmas Hymn Medley – arranged by Beth Rockwell

OPENING HYMN (*Please stand after vs. 2*)

“Once in Royal David’s City”

Hymn 343



1 Once in roy - al Da - vid's cit - y stood a low - ly
2 He came down to earth from heav - en who is God and
3 And our eyes at last shall see him through his own re -
4 Not in that poor, low - ly sta - ble with the ox - en



cat - tle shed, where a moth - er laid her ba - by in a
Lord of all, and his shel - ter was a sta - ble, and his
deem - ing love, for that child, so dear and gen - tle, is our
stand - ing by shall we see him, but in heav - en, set at



man - ger for his bed: Mar - y was that moth - er
cra - dle was a stall; with the poor and mean and
Lord in heav'n a - bove, and he leads his chil - dren
God's right hand on high. Then like stars his chil - dren



mild, Je - sus Christ her lit - tle child.
low - ly lived on earth our Sav - ior ho - ly.
on to the place where he is gone.
crowned, all in white, his praise will sound.

M: Dear people of God, in this Christmas season it is our duty and delight to hear again the message of the angels and, in heart and mind, to go to Bethlehem and see this thing which has come to pass, which the Lord has made known to us—
the Christ Child lying in a manger.

Let us read and learn in Holy Scripture the story of the loving purposes of God who in his right time sent a Savior to deliver us for all time.

But first, let us pray for people all over the world who would delight with us to know the good news of Jesus Christ, and who would join with us in singing his praises. Let us pray for the people of Lake County and for all those in our own congregation.

And, because this would please our Lord, let us remember, in his name, the poor and helpless, the cold, the hungry and the oppressed, the sick and those who are sad, the lonely and the unloved, the elderly and the little children. We especially remember all those who do not know the Lord Jesus, or who do not love him, or who by sin have grieved his heart of love.

Finally, let us remember before God all those who rejoice with us in heaven, who live in greater light than we, that multitude which no one can number, whose hope was in the Word made flesh, who died in faith, and who live before the throne of God and praise him each day in his temple. We confess that we are united with them as we are united with one another. To sum up all these petitions, let us pray as Christ himself taught us.

LORD'S PRAYER

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name, thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread; and forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us; and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever and ever. Amen.

LESSON – GOD STEPPED IN TO “BREAK” THE BROKEN

Genesis 3:8-15

Then the man and his wife heard the sound of the LORD God as he was walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and they hid from the LORD God among the trees of the garden. But the LORD God called to the man, “Where are you?”

He answered, “I heard you in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked; so I hid.”

And he said, “Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten from the tree that I commanded you not to eat from?”

The man said, “The woman you put here with me—she gave me some fruit from the tree, and I ate it.”

Then the Lord God said to the woman, “What is this you have done?”

The woman said, “The serpent deceived me, and I ate.”

So the Lord God said to the serpent, “Because you have done this,

Cursed are you above all the livestock

and all the wild animals!

You will crawl on your belly

and you will eat dust

all the days of your life.

And I will put enmity

between you and the woman,

and between your offspring and hers;
he will crush your head,
and you will strike his heel."

HYMN

"Come, Your Hearts and Voices Raising"

Hymn 362 vs. 1-4, & 6



1 Come, your hearts and voic - es rais - ing, Christ the
2 Christ, from heav'n to us de - scend - ing and in
3 Ja - cob's Star in all its splen - dor beams with
4 From the bond - age that op - pressed us, from sin's



Lord with glad - ness prais - ing; loud - ly sing his
love our race be - friend - ing, in our need his
com - fort sweet and ten - der, forc - ing Sa - tan
fet - ters that pos - sessed us, from the grief that



love a - maz - ing, wor - thy folk of Christ - en - dom.
help ex - tend - ing, saved us from the wi - ly foe.
to sur - ren - der, break - ing all the pow'rs of hell.
sore dis - tressed us, we, the cap - tives, now are free.

Gracious Child, in mercy hear us,
from your lowly manger cheer us,
gently lead us and be near us
till we join th' angelic choir.

LESSON – GOD STEPPED IN AS AN IMPOSSIBLE CHILD

Isaiah 9:2, 6, 7

Again the LORD spoke to Ahaz, “Ask the LORD your God for a sign, whether in the deepest depths or in the highest heights.”

But Ahaz said, “I will not ask; I will not put the LORD to the test.”

Then Isaiah said, “Hear now, you house of David! Is it not enough to try the patience of humans? Will you try the patience of my God also? Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign: The virgin will conceive and give birth to a son, and will call him Immanuel. ...

The people walking in darkness
have seen a great light;
on those living in the land of the shadow of death
a light has dawned. ...

For to us a child is born,
to us a son is given,
and the government will be on his shoulders.

And he will be called
Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God,
Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.
Of the increase of his government and peace
there will be no end.

He will reign on David’s throne
and over his kingdom,
establishing and upholding it
with justice and righteousness
from that time on and forever.

The zeal of the LORD Almighty
will accomplish this.



1 Where shep-herds late - ly knelt and kept the an - gel's word,
 2 In that un - like - ly place I find him as they said:
 3 How should I not have known I - sa - iah would be there,
 4 Can I, will I for - get how Love was born, and burned



I come in half - be - lief, a pil - grim strange - ly stirred;
 sweet new - born babe, how frail! And in a man - ger bed:
 his proph - e - cies ful - filled? With pound - ing heart I stare:
 its way in - to my heart— un - asked, un - forced, un - earned,



but there is room and wel - come there for me,
 a still, small voice to cry one day for me,
 a child, a son, the Prince of Peace for me,
 to die, to live, and not a - lone for me,



but there is room and wel - come there for me.
 a still, small voice to cry one day for me.
 a child, a son, the Prince of Peace for me.
 to die, to live, and not a - lone for me?

LESSON – GOD STEPPED IN TO MAKE LIFE RIGHT

Isaiah 11:1-11

A shoot will come up from the stump of Jesse;
 from his roots a Branch will bear fruit.

The Spirit of the LORD will rest on him—
 the Spirit of wisdom and of understanding,
 the Spirit of counsel and of might,
 the Spirit of the knowledge and fear of the LORD—
 and he will delight in the fear of the LORD.

He will not judge by what he sees with his eyes,
 or decide by what he hears with his ears;
 but with righteousness he will judge the needy,
 with justice he will give decisions for the poor of the earth.

He will strike the earth with the rod of his mouth;
with the breath of his lips he will slay the wicked.
Righteousness will be his belt
and faithfulness the sash around his waist.

The wolf will live with the lamb,
the leopard will lie down with the goat,
the calf and the lion and the yearling together;
and a little child will lead them.

The cow will feed with the bear,
their young will lie down together,
and the lion will eat straw like the ox.

The infant will play near the cobra's den,
and the young child will put its hand into the viper's nest.

They will neither harm nor destroy
on all my holy mountain,
for the earth will be filled with the knowledge of the LORD
as the waters cover the sea.

In that day the Root of Jesse will stand as a banner for the peoples; the nations will rally to him, and his resting place will be glorious. In that day the Lord will reach out his hand a second time to reclaim the surviving remnant of his people from Assyria, from Lower Egypt, from Upper Egypt, from Cush, from Elam, from Babylonia, from Hamath and from the islands of the Mediterranean.

The Word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.



1 Peace came to earth at last that cho-sen night when an - gels
 2 And who could be the same for hav-ing held the in - fant
 3 You show the Fa - ther none has ev - er seen, in flesh and
 4 How else could I have known you, O my God! How else could



clove the sky with song and light and God em - bod - ied
 in their arms and lat - er felt the wound - ed hands and
 blood you bore our griefs and pain, in bread and wine you
 I have loved you, O my God! How else could I em -



love and sheathed his might— Who could but gasp: Im-man-u - el!
 side, all doubts dis-pelled— Who could but sigh: Im-man-u - el!
 vis - it us a - gain— Who could but see: Im-man-u - el!
 brace you, O my God! Who could but pray: Im-man-u - el!



Who could but sing: Im - man - u - el!
 Who could but shout: Im - man - u - el!
 Who could but thrill: Im - man - u - el!
 Who could but praise: Im - man - u - el!

THE CHRISTMAS LESSON – PART 1

GOD STEPPED IN AS THE BABY BORN IN BETHLEHEM

Luke 2:1-7

In those days Caesar Augustus issued a decree that a census should be taken of the entire Roman world. (This was the first census that took place while Quirinius was governor of Syria.) And everyone went to his own town to register.

So Joseph also went up from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to Judea, to Bethlehem the town of David, because he belonged to the house

and line of David. He went there to register with Mary, who was pledged to be married to him and was expecting a child. While they were there, the time came for the baby to be born, and she gave birth to her firstborn, a son. She wrapped him in cloths and placed him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn.

HYMN

“Away in a Manger”

Hymn 340



1 A - way in a man - ger, no crib for a bed,
 2 The cat - tle are low - ing, the ba - by a - wakes,
 3 Be near me, Lord Je - sus; I ask you to stay



the lit - tle Lord Je - sus laid down his sweet head.
 but lit - tle Lord Je - sus, no cry - ing he makes.
 close by me for - ev - er and love me, I pray.



The stars in the bright sky looked down where he lay,
 I love you, Lord Je - sus; look down from the sky,
 Bless all the dear chil - dren in your ten - der care,



the lit - tle Lord Je - sus a - sleep on the hay.
 and stay by my side un - til morn - ing is night.
 and take us to heav - en to live with you there.

THE CHRISTMAS LESSON – PART 2

GOD STEPPED IN AS SAVIOR

Luke 2:8-14

And there were shepherds living out in the fields nearby, keeping watch over their flocks at night. An angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. But the angel said to them, “Do not be afraid. I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people. Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is Christ the Lord.

This will be a sign to you: You will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger.”

Suddenly a great company of the heavenly host appeared with the angel, praising God and saying,

“Glory to God in the highest,
and on earth peace to men on whom his favor rests.”

HYMN

“Angels We Have Heard on High”

Hymn 346



1 An - gels we have heard on high, sweet - ly sing - ing o'er the plains,
2 Shep - herds, why this ju - bi - lee? Why your joy - ous strains pro - long?
3 Come to Beth - le - hem and see him whose birth the an - gels sing;



and the moun - tains in re - ply, ech - o - ing their joy - ous strains.
What the glad - some ti - dings be which in - spire your heav'n - ly song?
come, a - dore on bend - ed knee Christ the Lord, the new - born King.



Glo - - - - ri - a



in ex - cel - sis De - o; glo - - -



- - - ri - a in ex - cel - sis De - o.

THE CHRISTMAS LESSON – PART 3

GOD STEPPED IN ... AND WE CELEBRATE

Luke 2:15-20

When the angels had left them and gone into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, "Let's go to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has told us about."

So they hurried off and found Mary and Joseph, and the baby, who was lying in the manger. When they had seen him, they spread the word concerning what had been told them about this child, and all who heard it were amazed at what the shepherds said to them. But Mary treasured up all these things and pondered them in her heart. The shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all the things they had heard and seen, which were just as they had been told.

CONFESSION OF FAITH

We glorify and praise God for the things we have heard and seen:

P "For to us a child is born, to us a son is given ...

C **And he will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace."**

P The angel said to Joseph, "Mary will give birth to a son ...

C **You are to give him the name Jesus, because he will save His people from their sins."**

P The angel said to Mary, "You will be with child and give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus.

C **He will be great and will be called the son of the most high."**

P All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had said through the prophet: The virgin will be with child and will give birth to a son ...

C **They will call him Immanuel – which means, "God with us."**

P In these last days God has spoken to us by his Son.
C To all who received him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God.

C I believe that Jesus Christ, true God, begotten of the father from eternity, and also true man, born of the Virgin Mary, is my Lord; Who has redeemed me, a lost and condemned creature, purchased and won me from all sins, from death, and from the power of the devil, not with gold or silver, but with his holy, precious blood and with his innocent suffering and death; All this he did that I should be his own, and live under him in his kingdom, and serve him in everlasting righteousness, innocence blessedness, just as he is risen from death, lives and rules eternity.

This is most certainly true.



1 What child is this who, laid to rest, on Mar - y's lap is
 2 Why lies he in such mean es - tate where ox - en now are
 3 So bring him in - cense, gold, and myrrh; come, peas - ant, king, to



sleep - ing, whom an - gels greet with an - thems sweet while
 feed - ing? Good Chris - tian, fear; for sin - ners here the
 own him. The King of kings sal - va - tion brings; let



shep - herds watch are keep - ing? This, this is
 si - lent Word is plead - ing. Nails, spear shall
 lov - ing hearts en - throne him. Raise, raise the



Christ the King, whom shep - herds guard and an - gels sing;
 pierce him through, the cross be borne for me, for you;
 song on high, the vir - gin sings her lul - la - by;



haste, haste to bring him laud, the babe, the son of Mar - y!
 hail, hail the Word made flesh, the babe, the son of Mar - y!
 joy, joy, for Christ is born, the babe, the son of Mar - y!

OFFERING – A Gift for Our Savior and Our Gift to Share

If you prefer to give online, the code at the right will take you to our Online Giving page. We invite our online givers to join in our offering with an “I Give Online” card in the pew racks.



Distribution of candles (See back page.)
Once your candle is lit, always hold it upright.

Please stand

HYMN

“Silent Night! Holy Night”

Hymn 337

Silent night, Holy night! All is calm, all is bright,
Round yon virgin mother and child. Holy infant, so tender and mild,
Sleep in heavenly peace, Sleep in heavenly peace.

Silent night, Holy night! Shepherds quake at the sight.
Glories stream from heaven afar; Heavenly hosts sing, Alleluia!
Christ the Savior is born! Christ the Savior is born!

Silent night, Holy night! Son of God, love’s pure light
Radiant beams from thy holy face With the dawn of redeeming grace,
Jesus, Lord at thy birth, Jesus, Lord at thy birth.

PRAYER

M When all was still in the midst of the night, Emmanuel, the Prince of Peace, descended from the almighty throne to dwell among us. May we receive him in the peace of forgiven hearts and proclaim your gracious goodwill to all people on earth, for he is God with us, Emmanuel, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

C **Amen.**

BLESSING

M Go forth into the world in peace, be of good courage, hold fast to that which is good, render to no one evil for evil, strengthen the fainthearted, support the weak, help the afflicted, honor all people, love and serve the Lord, rejoicing in the power of the Holy Spirit.

And the blessing of God Almighty—the Father, the Son, † and the Holy Spirit—be upon you and remain with you forever.

C **Amen.**

Extinguish candles (please hold upright until the wax hardens)

CLOSING HYMN

“Joy to the World”

Hymn 353

Joy to the world, the Lord is come! Let earth receive her King;
let ev'ry heart prepare him room and heav'n and nature sing,
and heav'n and nature sing, and heav'n, and heav'n and nature sing.

Joy to the earth, the Savior reigns! Let men their songs employ,
while fields and floods, rocks, hills, and plains repeat the sounding
joy,
repeat the sounding joy, repeat, repeat the sounding joy.

No more let sins and sorrows grow nor thorns infest the ground;
he comes to make his blessings flow far as the curse is found,
far as the curse is found, far as, far as the curse is found.

He rules the world with truth and grace and makes the nations prove
the glories of his righteousness and wonders of his love,
and wonders of his love, and wonders, wonders of his love.

Postlude

Joy to the World – Beth Rockwell

Thank you to our choir and musicians this Christmas week!

Beth Rockwell: flute and keyboards; Tim Samelson: piano; Meredith Fein: violin

Join Us In Worship This Christmas Season!

Christmas Day Sunday Worship - 9 am
New Year's Eve Service - 5 pm



Acknowledgments

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**For Your Safety
During the Candle Lighting in This Service**

- The Village of Libertyville and the Libertyville Fire Department require us to follow some rules when using hand-held candles. This is for your safety and the safety of all who worship here.
- The ushers will hand out wax candles only to adults and teenagers. Children under 10 should not be allowed to hold a lit candle. LED candles are available for children and all who prefer them.
- Ushers will be stationed to observe the whole worship area while the hand-held candles are lit. They are ready with fire extinguishers should any problem develop.
- Note where the exits are. In case of a fire, calmly proceed to the nearest exit.
- **Once your candle is lit, always hold it upright.**
- Keep the flame away from hair and clothing.
- When the lights come on after the prayer, blow the candle out and hold it upright until you exit. After the service ushers will be waiting at the exits for candle disposal.
- Please keep pieces of wax from falling on the floor. It will make the after-service cleanup much easier.

*In the Peace and Joy of the Christ-child,
Have a Merry Christmas and a Blessed New Year*