



# Songs of the Savior

*Advent Devotional | Week 2*

Advent is a time of preparing for Christmas and for Christ to come again. Our St. John Family Ministry has developed this devotional booklet as a way to help you connect with our Advent sermon series, *Songs of the Savior*. Our hope is that this booklet helps you and your family grow in your faith and love of Jesus through song. Each week of Advent will feature new songs and devotions.

Many of our teachers and staff have written a devotion for this booklet, based on some of their favorite Christmas songs. We pray these devotions will be a blessing to you during this season of Advent.

There are no devotions on Wednesdays or Sundays, so that you may join in worship, in person or on-line.

### **Advent Worship Schedule**

#### **Weekend:**

Traditional Praise: Sunday @8:00 (also online),  
9:30, & 11:00 AM

Modern Praise: Saturday @5:00 PM &  
Sunday @10:45 AM (also online)

#### **Wednesdays during Advent:**

@4:15 & 7:00 PM

**Listen to the  
Songs of Advent!**



Scan Here

**Read the  
Devotions of Advent!**



Scan Here

## Song: Santa Claus is Coming to Town

The famous song "Santa Claus is Coming to Town" is all about preparing yourself and others for the coming of Santa Claus who brings you gifts under your tree at CHRISTmas. The song tells us to be good and not to cry because Santa Claus is watching us, and if we are naughty, we won't get the gifts he has for us. While this isn't a church CHRISTmas song, it brings many different thoughts about the true meaning of CHRISTmas to my mind.

Why do we prepare so much for things that don't have eternal value? Why are we so worried about what some jolly ole man thinks of us to get a trinket? Santa wants us to be "good" to earn the gifts he has for us. These gifts are usually electronics, toys, clothes, and other earthly material things. We prepare for this by being good around the holidays. They say that *"Santa sees us when we are sleeping, he knows when we are awake, he knows if we've been bad or good-so be good for goodness sake."* Well thank goodness, God the Father sees us through the grace of Jesus. God knew us before we were born. He knows each and every one of us and knows every single sin. He doesn't have a list of our names and our wrongdoings. He knows our names and our slates are clean because of Jesus. He sent His Son to save us from our sins so that He could have us forever in Heaven. What greater gift could there be? God sees the real people we are and still wants us to be with Him forever. What greater comfort could there be that He knows all of our faults and all of our failures yet still loves us enough to want to spend all of eternity with us! "Greater love has no one than this, than to lay down one's life for his friends" (John 15:13.)

How are we preparing our hearts for the true meaning of CHRISTmas? The love that God has for us certainly outweighs Santa, yet we spend so much time worrying about getting those earthly gifts. We take pictures with a man in a red suit and tell him what we want for CHRISTmas. We run around looking for gifts to give and make lists of gifts to receive. We tell others "Santa is watching you" in hopes they will be good and kind to others. God's love is greater than us being good, for He tells us that our gift can't be earned through good works. "For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God— not by works, so that no one can boast" (Ephesians 2:8-9.)

We could never be good enough to earn eternal life in Heaven, but the Father sent the greatest gift, Jesus, to save us from our sins and give us

## December 5

the gift of eternal life in Heaven with Him.

I hope next time you hear this song; you think about the greatest gift we have ever received. It's a gift we don't just receive at CHRISTmas time. His love is never ending, and His grace is new each day. "Oh give thanks to the Lord, for He is good; for His steadfast love endures forever" (1 Chronicles 16:34.)

*Written by: Sara Jung, 5th grade Teacher*

## December 6

### Song: All I Want for Christmas is You

"For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Romans 6:23.)

One of my favorite Christmas songs, which doesn't get much play on the radio nowadays, is "All I Want for Christmas is You." NOT the overplayed Mariah Carey version from 1994, but the bluesy original song by Vince Vance & the Valiants, released in 1989. The refrain goes as follows:

*I don't need expensive things, They don't matter to me, All that I want,  
can't be found, Underneath the Christmas tree.*

I grew up on the west side of Detroit in the 60's, where Dad was a cop and Mom barely made ends meet for my four brothers and me. Since money was always tight, Dad would take all his vacation time for the year and spend the weeks before Christmas in a broken-down rented trailer in the local shopping mall parking lot selling Christmas trees. He wanted to make sure there would be something for each of us under our tree. Dad bought us gifts for Christmas, but his greater gift was his willingness to sacrifice to make his boys a little happier. I doubt any of us really understood that until we became parents ourselves.

God loved the world so much that He gave the greatest gift of all, Jesus, to us, His children. It was a sacrificial gift that cost much more than money or time. It cost Him His one and only Son who was humiliated, beaten, and hung on a cross for our sins. We may not get everything we want for Christmas, but we know that the greatest gift of all has already been given - our savior Jesus. Because He died and rose again, He is all we need to have the joy and peace of Christmas for eternity.

What do you want for Christmas?

*Written by: Gary Nelson, 4th Grade Teacher*

## Song: In a Little Stable

"And she gave birth to her firstborn son and wrapped him in swaddling cloths and laid him in the manger, because there was no room for them in the inn" (Luke 2:7.)

*In a little stable, far across the sea, Was a little baby, just like you and me. Not a bed or cradle, not a pillow deep, But a lowly manger, was His place to sleep. Shepherds stood around Him, Angels watched with care, For they loved the baby, Lying, smiling there. Oh I love this Jesus, who was little then for I know He loves me, little though I am.*

As a small four-year-old child, I remember singing this song for the Sunday School Christmas program at the front of the church with many other children. As our hands formed the stables, I can remember thinking my hands looked just like the stables I had seen on cards. In my head I was telling the story of how Jesus was born through music. It was so fun to do the motions with the song. This has always been a favorite song to teach my students throughout the years.

As it is shared in the verse from Luke, Mary laid Jesus in a manger. Mangers were feed boxes found with the animals in the stables and not a soft comfy crib. Jesus came to us without a room or a bed to sleep in. Can we even think of something like that happening today? We have everything imaginable for newborns, yet Jesus came to be our Savior as a tiny baby with nothing. He would grow up to suffer and die for our sins because of His love for us. It doesn't end there. He rose on Easter Sunday and defeated sin, death, and the devil. One day, because of Him, we will receive the gift of eternal life in heaven.

As we go through our Advent and Christmas preparations may we always keep our hearts and minds focused on the Christ Child who is our Savior. God's blessings to each of you as we celebrate the best gift, Jesus.

What do you think it would be like to be born into such a tough situation?

*Written by: Karen Neumeyer, Preschool Director*

## Song: Rockin' Around the Christmas Tree

I absolutely love the JOY that you can feel through the music in the song, "Rockin' Around the Christmas Tree," by Brenda Lee. Please tell me you have heard this song before and you agree it puts the ultimate Christmas "feeling" in the air when you hear it for the first time on the radio to kick off the holiday season. I mean, come ON, how can you not dance when you hear it?!

Although this song is not a Christmas hymn and it does not acknowledge Christ in any way, isn't "Rockin' Around the Christmas Tree" (in a stretch) what we strive to do? We strive to "Rock" or have joy around the "Christmas Tree", because of the ultimate sacrifice made on a cross/tree by Jesus, which is our one and only focus! Yes, Christmas is about the birth of our Savior whose purpose was to die for us!

1 Peter 2:24 says this, "He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, that we might die to sin and live in righteousness."

Isn't it mind blowing to think that God knew, before the creation of the earth, where the exact tree would grow, in the future it would be cut down, and it would be turned into the shape of the cross for His son, Jesus, to die upon. Our God is *intentional*. Just like he picked the perfect tree for its purpose, he picks you for a perfect purpose, too!

I challenge you in this Advent season to recognize God's intentionality in YOUR life, to be intentional yourself by keeping Christ in Christmas, and to be filled with joy because of what Christ has done for you. Because of His grace. Because of His perfect love. "Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us - for it is written, 'Cursed is everyone who is hanged on a tree'" (Galatians 3:13.) It is said that the Christmas tree is a symbol of Christ and the new life that you have with him. Be reminded of that in the groovy song "Rockin' Around the Christmas Tree" when you hear it, when decorating your Christmas tree, and when gathering with loved ones this season.

Let us pray: God, we thank you, that you are an intentional God with a perfect plan for everything in creation. Thank you for sending Jesus to die, on a tree, to take away the sin of the world, so that we may have life with you. May we glorify you in all we say and all that we do, spreading JOY as we gather with loved ones this holiday season because your grace abounds. In Your Holy Name, Amen!

How can you use the tree this season to remind yourself of Jesus' work?

*Written by: Brandi Cronkright, Kindergarten Teacher*



## Song: O Come, O Come Emmanuel

We all spend time waiting. We wait in lines at theme parks, stores, and airports. We wait in rooms at doctor's offices and hospitals. This waiting is apparent. It is time carved into your day that people often do not look forward to. While most people do not enjoy waiting, there is, at times, the positive anticipation of something coming your way. Today it looks like countdowns to vacations, birthdays, weddings, and anniversaries. Take a step into any classroom in the United States, and the teachers and students are both counting down the days until Christmas break.

*O come, O come, Emmanuel,  
And ransom captive Israel,  
That mourns in lonely exile here,  
Until the Son of God appear.  
Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel  
Shall come to thee, O Israel.*

Luke 2:11 reads, "Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is the Messiah, the Lord." When the shepherds heard this message, they didn't set out an itinerary, or make sure they packed all the right things, they just went to see their Savior. They had been part of a group of people who waited long enough, the time had come, and they were going. In the song, "O Come, O Come Emmanuel" there are people waiting. They are not waiting in lines, they are not counting down the days until their next Disney vacation, they are a group of captive people waiting for their savior. They are, like us, being held hostage by their sin. They are in need of a savior to come to pay the ransom. As we prepare our hearts for Christmas, we rejoice to know that Jesus has come, and will come again, to "Open wide our heavenly home."

We as humans, in 2022, understand what it means to wait. In fact, one could argue, you can tell a lot about a person, based on what they are waiting for.

So, what are you waiting for?

*Written by: Cassie Benter, Middle School Teacher/Media Specialist*



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