

Songs of the Savior
Advent Devotional | Week 3

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: All I Want for Christmas is My Two Front Teeth

*Everybody stops and stares at me
 These two teeth are gone as you can see
 I don't know just who to blame for this catastrophe
 But my one wish on Christmas Eve is as plain as can be*

As a child, I grew up caroling during Christmas. The group was primarily comprised of adult members in our church, but kids were often dragged along to round out the group. Looking back on it, I think we may have been used for our cuteness factor and it was cheaper than getting a babysitter, but at the time I thought I was a vital and indispensable part of the choir. I was always amazed at how my dad could sing harmony to every song we sang, and in my attempt to outdo him, I created my own off-key harmonious melodies. Other than that, being a child member of the caroling crew meant smiling at the audience and hoping that hot chocolate or cookies would be provided. I did, however, look forward to the moment when the kids were shuffled up to the front to dazzle the audience with our rendition of "All I Want for Christmas is My Two Front Teeth." It was our time to shine, even if the premise of the song was a lie. I wanted a lot for Christmas! My list was carefully crafted, and it most definitely did not include front teeth!

In childhood, Christmas can easily become all about what we want for Christmas. I think if many of us were being honest, that hasn't changed as adults. The season becomes a time of thinking about what gifts we need to buy and what gifts we will receive. We are inundated with secret Santas, white elephant gifts, wrapping, giving, and receiving. This oftentimes becomes so important that we forget about the most important gift, Jesus. "Thanks be to God for his indescribable gift" (2 Corinthians 9:15.)

God was the first gift giver. He selflessly gave himself to us in the person of his Son. This undeserved gift is what provides us with the assurance of heaven, a deeper truth in what we are here on earth to do, and a peace that allows us to not be troubled or afraid. Christmas is a time to reflect upon that. Giving and receiving gifts isn't a bad thing, but it would be a great shift in thinking if we thought about the gifts we give to others as a response of gratitude to His gift. How meaningful would it be if every time we bought, wrapped, or received a present we were reminded of what God has gifted us?

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We may not get our two front teeth or whatever our deepest material Christmas wish may be, but we have received an undeserved gift that this Christmas season is really about. "For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Romans 6:23.)

Think back to a Christmas in the past. What gift did you want more than anything else? How can you remind yourself of God's greatest gift as you buy and receive gifts this Christmas season?

Written by: Elizabeth Leinberger, Assistant Principal



Song: Silent Night

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.

Countless greeting cards and paintings of the first Christmas depict the stable animals and people gathered around looking intently at Baby Jesus with quiet attention. But was it really that quiet?

In Bethlehem, a young girl was giving birth for the first time. Her pained and anxious cries in a makeshift delivery room, complete with barn animals, probably weren't very peaceful.

The shepherds' experience that night wasn't peaceful either. I don't know what a multitude of the heavenly host praising God and saying "Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace, good will toward men" sounds like, but I don't think the angels were whispering the news to the shepherds.

And then the shepherds left their fields and hurried to find the newborn Baby after their encounter with the angels. Do you think they were quietly tiptoeing through the streets of Bethlehem? I'm sure they weren't searching too quietly.

I don't think it was a silent night.

But perhaps this beloved Christmas carol can remind us that it is possible to have silent, quiet time with Jesus. "Be still and know that I am God..." (Psalm 46:10) encourages us to set aside our never-ending to-do lists, the flurry of activity that accompanies our Christmas preparations and just be still.

Do you know what one of the blessings of being still and spending quiet time with Jesus is? It is a peace, a heavenly peace, that quiets our fears and calms our anxious hearts. I pray that you can find time this Advent season to Be. Still.

What does JUST BE STILL look like for you?

Written by: Sandy Carr, Preschool Aide

Song: Welcome to Our World

"And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus. He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. And the Lord God will give to him the throne of his father David, and he will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end" (Luke 1: 31 - 33.)

Advent is a time of preparation, a time where we, as Christians, eagerly wait for the arrival of the Christ Child, Immanuel, God with us. We, like little children, are filled with excitement, waiting for the time when we can finally open all those beautifully wrapped presents under our Christmas tree. But unlike those presents, our best present is Jesus, coming into the world as a baby in order to live a perfect life, fulfilling the Law, and then dying on the cross as an innocent victim so that one day we may live forever with Him in heaven.

A song that has always moved me during the Christmas season is "Welcome to Our World." Originally written by Chris Rice, it has been recorded by many other Christian artists. As it begins it describes our human condition prior to Jesus' arrival; *"how we need to hear from God."* The Old Testament prophecies reminded the Jews that the promised one would someday come. They have been waiting and now that time of promise has arrived! We sing *"Welcome Holy Child"* and *"make yourself at home."* Still, we also sing that even though Jesus has arrived, the earth is still filled with violence instead of peace, broken hearts, and hungry souls wanting to be filled.

Jesus came as an innocent baby and He will continue to live a perfect, innocent life. His *"fragile finger"* has been *"sent to heal us."* His *"tender brow"* is *"prepared for thorn."* His *"tiny heart whose blood will save us"* brings me to tears each time I hear or sing this song. We may think *"that's not fair!"* However, it was God's plan all along, and He gave us His one and only Son, His priceless treasure, so that we can be saved.

With Jesus in our hearts, we invite Jesus into our world. *"Rob our sin and make us holy, perfect Son of God."* Praise God that He has come, *"Welcome to our world" our "long expected Jesus!"*

What do you look forward to prior to Christmas? Is it the parties, the gifts, the lights, or is it something else? How can we, as Christians, focus on the true meaning of Christmas, Jesus Christ?

Written by: Dave Frobels, 7th grade Teacher

Song: Wham!ageddon

Every family has their Christmas traditions, and my family has plenty of traditions too: decorating the tree, hanging the stockings, and baking more cookies than you could possibly eat! In my family, we especially love listening to Christmas music, but my favorite Christmas song is one that we DON'T listen to.

Each year, my brothers and I play "Wham!ageddon", a game where the only rule is this: if you hear the song "Last Christmas" by Wham! you're out. It doesn't matter where you are or what you are doing, as soon as you recognize those 80's synthetic keys, you're on the loser board!

The goal is to make it all the way to December 25th without hearing the song. It's harder than you'd think to avoid this extremely popular tune. "Last Christmas" could pop up anywhere, when you are walking through the mall, enjoying dinner at a restaurant, or listening to a playlist of seasonal tunes, and once you hear it, you are out until next year!

During the Christmas season, as I play this silly game with my family, I am hyper-aware of every song I hear, waiting to be "Whammed" at any moment: at the grocery store, in line at the bank, and even when I turn on my car radio in the morning. Everyday activities become moments of anticipation as we all wait to get Whammed - we know it's coming; we just don't know when! There is joy and community as we anticipate together.

I sometimes wonder if God's people felt the same anticipation. They knew something was coming: not a song, but a Savior. The prophet Micah says "But you, Bethlehem Ephrathah, though you are small among the clans of Judah, out of you will come for me one who will be ruler over Israel, whose origins are from old, from ancient times...He will stand and shepherd his flock in the strength of the Lord, in the majesty of the name of the Lord his God. And they will live securely, for then his greatness will reach to the ends of the earth" (Micah 5:2, 4).

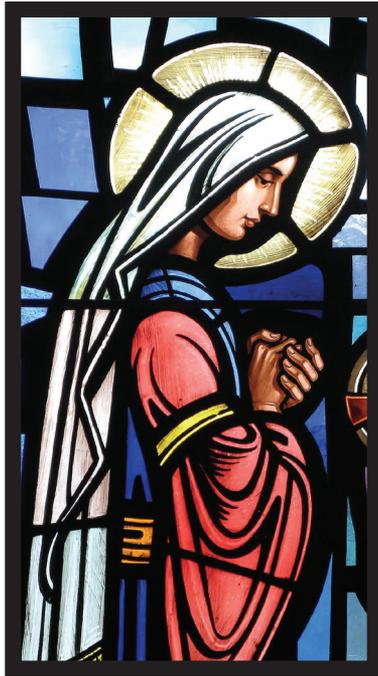
God promised His people over and over that He would one day send a Savior, but His people didn't know when. Did they live their lives in anticipation, looking for the Messiah everywhere they went? Did they ever stop in the marketplace and wonder, is that him? Did they wake up each day, hearts a-flutter with excitement, wondering, if today would be the day He comes, the one who will be our shepherd? Did they ever get

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caught up in the hustle and bustle of daily life and forget?

This advent season, what are you anticipating? What everyday moments bring you joy and excitement? How does that anticipation point us to the joy we find in Christ?

Written by: Grace Gilson, 1st Grade Teacher



Song: See Amid the Winter's Snow

"But God shows His love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us" (Romans 5:8.)

Back in the 90's, it was a bit unusual to attend Concordia College after attending public schools K-12. Lutheran Education was in my family, but not my immediate family. This is one of the reasons I believe a child's home congregation is so very important when it comes to encouraging future church workers. Not only was I taken under the wing of a few church workers in my congregation, but many members of my congregation often talked about this possibility for me, and look how God worked that out!

Many doors of new opportunities were opened for me while in college, but something I had never seen or heard of was a thing called Boar's Head Festival. For those who don't know, Boar's Head Festival is a beautiful musical pageant where participants reenact medieval Christmas traditions and the story of the birth of Christ. When I was a freshman at Concordia, my roommate and I decided to participate, and I was cast as a servant girl. I was rather excited because one of the tasks given to me was to serve cookies to members of the audience during the performance! I figured that was a sure hit!

Concordia, Ann Arbor puts on Boar's Head Festival performances every year in early December. It is truly something to witness. I will never forget that experience for many reasons. One incredibly moving moment for me was hearing the English carol, "See Amid the Winter's Snow" for the first time. It was sung by a collection of beautiful voices paired with a majestic pipe organ. I had never heard of this carol, nor read the lyrics. There are several verses to it, but the two that were sung at Boar's Head struck my heart for different reasons.

The first stanza speaks of the '*tender Lamb*' who was '*promised from eternal years.*' To think that so many people waited for the gift of this '*tender Lamb*', namely Jesus Christ, for so long really brings a comfort and camaraderie to me with those believers. I don't know about you, but I have so much trouble waiting for things, especially when the wait involves desperation. In March of 2020, my oldest son was studying abroad in London, England. Read that date again. Yes, it was right when the pandemic was hitting. I have never read a more beautiful text than when I saw, '*landed*', on my phone on March 16, 2020, from my

son. With the world literally shutting down, that was a wait of complete desperation for this mama. God's people also had a wait of desperation, after all, this was a matter of eternity. To finally hear that the wait was over, that God's perfect timing was being fulfilled, what joy and relief this must have been for God's people!

The other stanza sung at Boar's Head asks the Holy Child Jesus to teach His people how we can resemble the humility He was demonstrating in coming to the world as a helpless infant, the same world He created and had complete charge over! To clothe Himself in that kind of humility, willingly taking on the punishment we deserved, so that we would gain the benefit of salvation, is a level of humility we will never be able to match. Pondering these truths through a carol sung at Boar's Head in Ann Arbor is something I will always count as a blessing. Listen to the song and see if the lyrics speak to your heart this Advent season as we prepare for the coming of our Savior and King! Praise God for always fulfilling His promises in His perfect timing, and for an example of humility that gifted His believers an eternity with Him! "Sing to all Jerusalem, Christ is born in Bethlehem!" (cr: Edward Caswall, 1858)

What have you personally experienced in your past that assured your heart you were, and are, deeply loved by your Savior, Jesus?

Written by: Kristen Janetzke, Kindergarten Teacher





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