



Songs of the Savior
Advent Devotional | Week 4

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!**



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**Read the
Devotions of Advent!**



Scan Here

Song: A Stable Lamp Is Lighted

*A stable lamp is lighted whose glow shall wake the sky;
The stars shall bend their voices, and every stone shall cry.
And every stone shall cry, and straw like gold shall shine;
A barn shall harbor heaven, a stall become a shrine.*

*This child through David's city shall ride in triumph by;
The palm shall strew its branches, and every stone shall cry.
And every stone shall cry, though heavy, dull and dumb,
And lie within the roadway to pave his kingdom come.*

*Yet he shall be forsaken, and yielded up to die;
The sky shall groan and darken, and every stone shall cry.
And every stone shall cry, for gifts of love abused;
God's blood upon the spearhead, God's blood again refused.*

*But now, as at the ending, the low is lifted high;
The stars shall bend their voices, and every stone shall cry.
And every stone shall cry, in praises of the child
By whose descent among us, the worlds are reconciled.*

"When He came near the place where the road goes down the Mount of Olives, the whole crowd of disciples began joyfully to praise God in loud voices for all the miracles they had seen: 'Blessed is the king who comes in the name of the Lord!' 'Peace in heaven and glory in the highest!' Some of the Pharisees in the crowd said to Jesus, 'Teacher, rebuke your disciples!' 'I tell you,' He replied, 'if they keep quiet, the stones will cry out'" (Luke 19:37-40.)

When it comes to the pecking order of creation, stones are not very high on the list. Often dull and dirty, these heavy objects are useful at best: lining roadways, strengthening walls, and filling drainage ditches. They are not usually noticed (unless they are in our way). Jesus drew attention to stones during His triumphal entry into Jerusalem on Palm Sunday. At face value, the Master Teacher's rebuke of the Pharisees sounds intriguing. What if the stones did, in fact, cry out? The truth is, they have been waiting a long time to do so. Paul writes in the eighth chapter of Romans that the whole of creation has been "groaning", waiting for the "freedom and glory of God to be revealed" since it has been "subjected to frustration and decay through no will of its own" (Romans 8:19-22.) In the Garden of Eden, Adam and Eve's fall into sin

brought death and destruction to all of Creation. The created world was, as Paul puts it, frustrated. But now, the time had arrived! In the small hands of a baby born in Bethlehem, the freedom and glory of God was revealed. In weathered hands of a Rabbi from Nazareth, the freedom and glory of God was revealed. In the outstretched hands of the Savior nailed to a cross, the freedom and glory of God was revealed. In the nail-marked hands of the risen Jesus, the freedom and glory of God was revealed!

Richard Wilbur's hymn, "A Stable Lamp is Lighted", is a newer carol that is not as popular as so many others. Its words beautifully tell the story of the freedom and glory of God revealed in the person of our Savior Jesus. Why, then, were the stones not permitted to finally cry out? It simply is not their job to do! That task has been given to us. May we this Advent and Christmas Season strive to share the story of the babe born in Bethlehem and cry out "in praises of the child by whose descent among us, the worlds are reconciled".

Written by: Nick Kwapis, Director of Music



Song: Were You There

*Were you there, were you there on that Christmas night,
When the world was filled with a holy light?
Were you there to behold when the wonder foretold came to earth?*

*Did you see, did you see how they hailed him King,
with the gifts so rare That they chose to bring?
Did you see how they bowed as they praised Him Aloud at his birth?*

*Did you hear how the choirs of angels sang
at the glory of the sight? Did you hear how the bells
of heaven rang all through the night?*

*Did you know, did you know it was God's own son,
the salvation of the world begun?
Did you know it was love that was sent from above to the earth?*

It was Christmas season at Peace Lutheran Church and School in Detroit, Michigan. The year was 1979, and I, Lori Pettiford (Clark) was 10 years old. I was in 5th grade and overjoyed to be allowed to sing with the big choirs that year. Those choirs included my sisters Linda and Lisa in the youth choirs and my mother Carolyn in the adult senior choir. About 60 people would be gathered on Christmas Eve to worship and bring celebratory songs to our newborn King, Jesus!! What an honor, what a delight....and to think the 5th graders would be singing with the other choirs a new favorite song...*Were You There?* We were starting to get the hang of harmonizing and blending with other voices, and we were so thankful to be involved. The words of this song by Natalie Sleeth truly touched all of us. She did a beautiful job of painting a picture of what witnessing that amazing birth would have been like. Starting with the enormous light from heaven as the sky filled with the heavenly hosts of angels, singing praises and announcing the wonder foretold... JESUS WAS HERE! Then onward to the great kings bringing gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh.... traveling with their entourage, kneeling humbly in a stable to an infant, BELIEVING the news of the SAVIOR arriving. Although we sang that song for three separate services that night, no one grew tired of the story, the greeting to our newborn King. We loved lighting the candles for the midnight service and hearing the words lingering throughout the church..."Did you hear how the bells of heaven rang all through the night, did you know it was God's own Son? The salvation of the world begun"....and then quietly, yet powerfully

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finishing..."Did you know it was love that was sent from above to the earth?" It was such a special memory for me and I feel so blessed to feel that joy over and over again. The joy that comes with the absolute certainty that yes, I absolutely DO KNOW. It was love, sent from above to heal and save us all.

What part of worship on Christmas Eve has been a blessing to you through the years?

Written by: Lori Clark, 2nd Grade Teacher



Song: Joseph's Lullaby

Go to sleep my Son, This manger for Your bed, You have a long road before You, Rest Your little head; Can You feel the weight of Your glory? Do You understand the price? Or does the Father guard Your heart for now, So You can sleep tonight?

Go to sleep my Son, Go and chase Your dreams, This world can wait for one more moment, Go and sleep in peace, I believe the glory of Heaven's lying in my arms tonight.

But Lord, I ask that He for just this moment, Simply be my child, Go to sleep my Son Baby, close Your eyes, Soon enough You'll save the day but for now, dear Child of mine, Oh, my Jesus, Sleep tight.

Every Christmas Eve is busy for me. As church workers, we have a lot to do on that day. Whether I am getting candles ready, cleaning up, or planning a children's message, it is not uncommon that by the time I get home, it is no longer Christmas Eve but Christmas Day! Due to this unpredictable schedule and the odd hours I get home, I have a tradition of going into the living room around 1:00 AM with the lights on and sitting down to think and pray. My whole family is long asleep. I am just sitting, listening to music, and reflecting on the promise of Jesus.

Joseph's Lullaby is a song I heard several years ago while sitting in my living room. It touched me to hear these words of a dad; a dad who had gone through the craziness of the birth of his son in difficult circumstances. He was in a different town, with different people, with a woman who had a child who was not his own. This song is not based on anything in scripture, but I do think it reflects upon the possibility of Joseph's love for his son. Joseph is only mentioned in the Gospels once; when he was going to divorce Mary quietly and the Angel of the Lord intervenes. Now, you might think Joseph was this bad guy for wanting to divorce Mary, but the key is that he wanted to divorce her quietly. In fact, had Joseph done what was required by the law, he would have divorced her loudly and she would have been shunned or possibly stoned to death for having a child outside of marriage. Joseph was a kind man who loved his wife and son.

This Christmas Eve, as you are thinking about and waiting for all the hustle of presents in the morning, the meals you will cook, or the future things you will need to do, may you sit and just enjoy the moment of

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being in God's presence. He is the God who has come to be near you, who came to live and die for you. He is the God who died in your place.

When is a time this Christmas season you can stop and take time to reflect on Jesus and His work for you?

Written by: Steve Wilson, Director of Child and Family Ministry



Song: Mary, Did You Know?

I love Christmas songs! I'm one of those annoying people that listens to Christmas music from November until about February, much to my hubby's chagrin. When we were in our 1st year of marriage, I had one cassette tape, "Tennessee Christmas," by Amy Grant. I listened to it on repeat and it drove him nuts! Back in the 80s, there were no music streaming services, playlists, or even iPods. For Christmas my hubby purchased new technology, a Compact Disc boom box. He also purchased the Time Life collection of Classic Christmas Songs - a 4 CD set. Anything to avoid listening to that same album on repeat!

One of my favorite Christmas songs more recently written (1996) is *Mary, Did You Know?* It has been covered by many singers, but was originally written by a Christian comic, Mark Lowry. My favorite versions are from Kathy Mattea, Michael English, and Pentatonix.

These questions are posed to Mary in the lyrics:

*"Mary, did you know that your baby boy would one day walk on water?...
 Mary, did you know that your baby boy will give sight to a blind man?
 Mary, did you know that your baby boy will calm the storm with his
 hand? Did you know that your baby boy has walked where angels
 trod?... Mary, did you know that your baby boy Is Lord of all creation?
 Mary, did you know that your baby boy would one day rule the nations?"*

If you look into the Biblical account in Luke 1:30-33, of the angel's announcement to Mary, it is clear that Mary did know, maybe not the particulars, but surely the importance of this miraculous birth!

"And the angel said to her, 'Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. 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.'"

After Mary's visit with Elizabeth, Mary reflects on all this news and sings boldly:

"And Mary said, 'My soul magnifies the Lord, and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior, for he has looked on the humble estate of his servant. For behold, from now on all generations will call me blessed; for he who

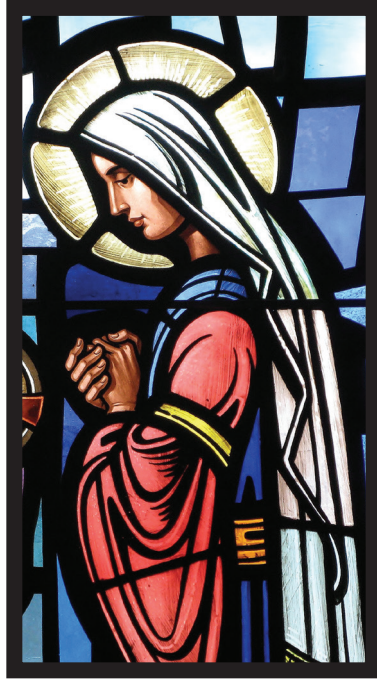
is mighty has done great things for me, and holy is his name. And his mercy is for those who fear him from generation to generation.”

Mary continues to reflect on God’s power and majesty throughout her song. She is very aware that this baby would be God’s Son and he would impact the generations to come.

Did she know the specific miracles that he would perform as a man? Probably not. But did she understand that the mantle of sin would rest upon him? Yes, and she pondered these things in her heart.

How can you ponder the things you know about Jesus this Christmas season?

Written by: Elizabeth Nelson, 1st Grade Teacher





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