

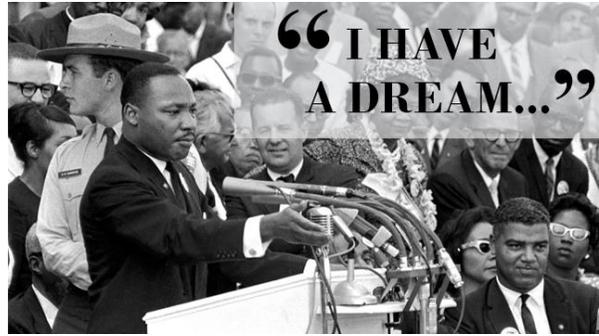
## DAILY READING SCHEDULE

<i>Date</i>	<i>Text</i>	<i>Writer</i>
2-Dec-18	Acts 2:17-18	Pastor Gwen Hermanson
3-Dec-18	Psalms 126:1-3	Lynn Kidder
4-Dec-18	Genesis 37:17b-20	Donna Green
5-Dec-18	Job 33:14-18	Dan Polzin
6-Dec-18	Isaiah 29:7-8	Kathryn Christenson
7-Dec-18	Daniel 2:19-23	John Bipes
8-Dec-18	Ecclesiastes 5:7	Amy Pehrson
9-Dec-18	Genesis 28:10-22	Grace Timm
10-Dec-18	Matthew 1:18-25	John & Jan Holte
11-Dec-18	Deuteronomy 13:1-13	Emily Bruflat
12-Dec-18	Genesis 41:1-16	Gordon Long
13-Dec-18	Daniel 2:1-49 long	Chad Winterfeldt
14-Dec-18	Genesis 40:6-8	Alex Davig
15-Dec-18	Jeremiah 23:30-32	Rylee Stadick
16-Dec-18	Isaiah 11:1-9	Mary Spear
17-Dec-18	Isaiah 65:17-25	Laura Lindell
18-Dec-18	Micah 4:1-5	James Dontje
19-Dec-18	Isaiah 25:6-9	Bob Stenson
20-Dec-18	Joel 2:28-29	Paul Aasen
21-Dec-18	Luke 1:39-45	Raina Roemhildt
22-Dec-18	Luke 1:46-55	Paula Kennedy
23-Dec-18	Luke 1: 67-79	Pat Pehrson
24-Dec-18	Matthew 2:9-12	Rebekah & Gabriela Roemhildt
25-Dec-18	Matthew 2: 13-15	Barb Wilkinson

Sunday, December 2



Text: Acts 2:17-18



*Pastor Gwen*

Welcome to Advent! This year we are exploring dreams. We will hear stories of God speaking through dreams, God's people interpreting dreams, God inspiring our dreams for the future, and our responding to those dreams. By the end of this season, it should be clear that God uses dreams in beneficial ways.

As I pondered this as our theme, I found myself singing along with Amy Grant about a grownup Christmas list, which includes:

*No more lives torn apart  
That wars would never start  
And time would heal all hearts  
And everyone would have a friend  
And right would always win  
And love would never end, no  
This is my grown up Christmas list*

In Acts 2, Peter is quoting the prophet Joel. Both are yearning for and proclaiming a day when things are better because our dreams will be aligned with God's dream for us. It's a day in which our Christmas list is informed by what God most wants to give us. Someday, sons and daughters, young and old, slave and free, men and women... everyone will be listening and in on what God is doing.

Advent is a season of waiting. What are we waiting for? Presents under the tree? A new toy? A Christmas feast? An opportunity to sing our favorite Christmas carols? Are we also waiting for and anticipating more "grown up" things? Are we listening to our dreams? (You could try writing down your nighttime and/or daytime dreams!) Are we listening for God's dream for us?

Blessings to you this Advent season as you explore "God's Dream for Us" with the volunteer devotional writers of First Lutheran!

Peace,  
Pastor Gwen

Monday, December 3



Text: Psalm 126:1-3

*Lynn Kidder*

The dream in Psalm 126 is the type of dream that one has when one is envisioning what one hopes will happen or longs for to happen. Some scholars say this text is talking about how at first the Israelites were thrilled upon their return from the Babylonian Exile. It was like a dream. After a while they realized things were not going as they had envisioned, and they began to lament their situation (verses 4-6).

I can identify with this notion of dreaming. Before I had children I dreamed about what our family would be like. I was thrilled having our babies. It was like a dream come true. Now that my children are adults and family relationships are not like my dreams, I am very much like those Israelites who realized it was harder returning to Israel than anticipated, but praised the greatness of God that they were restored to Zion, and had hope for God's help in the future.

*Please help us, God, when the going gets tough. I pray for us to remember your greatness, and remain hopeful when the future looks bleak.*

Tuesday, December 4



Text: Genesis 37:17b-20

*Donna Green*

We know that God took the brothers ill intent and turned it into something good – when later Joseph, as 2<sup>nd</sup> only to Pharaoh in Egypt, was able to save his father and brothers from starvation during famine. My own personal dream story begins with being raised in a conservative German Lutheran church, where the pastor in his role as Confirmation instructor, used what I thought was a hurtful, stern, and unbending approach to us as adolescents. My dream was that I would become a pastor who could relate to all ages, and especially adolescents, in a more “effective” manner. This was, however, many years before there was any thought of women serving in that role.

Several years passed, and as a student at Luther College, I heard a very moving talk by the then director of Lutheran Social Service of Iowa, Paul Boe. A lightbulb flashed in my mind, that I might be able to do some of the things I had dreamed of doing as a pastor, in a role as Counselor for LSS. You might say it was my Confirmation pastor, and what I saw as this “hurtful” style that actually got me started in this direction, with Paul Boe’s wisdom serving as the catalyst. Thank you Rev. W, thank you Paul, and thank you God.

*Dear Lord...Give us faith to go out with good courage, not knowing where we go, but only that your hand is leading us and your love supporting us.*

Wednesday, December 5



Text: Job 33:14-18

*Dan Polzin*

Over time, chances are that many of us have changed our opinions about the Book of Job.

I offer you what I believe this book is offering us, and it is this: God doesn't play games with our lives (nor our loved ones lives). The pain we experience is not a test to see how much we can bear, nor is it a lesson for the wrongs we may have done.

Earlier in the book Job is urged - in the midst of his horrid suffering - to curse God and then die. Job does not do this. However, Job DOES curse the day he was born because of some "well meaning" friends. This was because Job was not waiting for lectures defending people's opinions of God.

Job wanted answers FROM God. And Job spoke rather frighteningly and directly, yet honestly, to God. And God took it. But then God Almighty spoke even more frighteningly and directly and honestly to Job. God's response in Chaps. 38 - 41 is, I believe, the most beautiful imagery in the Old Testament\*.

In the end, the "answer" Job received was not the answer Job expected. Oddly enough it was one of Job's "friends" who unwittingly gave a glimpse as to God's intentions towards us (found in our verses); and that is: God will find us - even using our dreams. God's desire is that we know we belong to God.

You see, the answer Job believed he wanted was not an answer that would save him (the answers to Why Questions seldom have the power to save us.) The Book of Job allows us to see that Job ends up receiving God's Self: God's voice. God's face. *That* is God's answer to Job.

Doesn't it seem possible that what we finally want to know - what we finally *need to know* - is that God is with us? To trust that God has not lost us. We just want to know - to believe - that no matter how small, or confused, or in pain we feel; the One who created and sustains the Universe has taken hold of us ... forever. For. Ever.

\* if you can find a copy of the *Jerusalem Bible* translation - read Chaps. 38-41. Get a glimpse of the One who has taken hold of you - Forever!

Thursday, December 6



Text: Isaiah 29:7-8

*Kathryn Christenson*

In your dreams! Your army will prevail against superior military forces 150 years after the fact. This dream keeps people flying the Confederate flag.

Dreamers! You will wake after a thousand-mile walk to be fed and nourished. This dream leads families to escape oppression and violence, hoping to find sanctuary in a welcoming land.

Shepherds, awake! Advent is a dream of birth and redemption. Like shepherds near Bethlehem, we have the choice, when we wake, between following lost causes or envisioning a kinder, gentler, world.

*Dear God, Wake us from delusional dreams. Help us follow the Light of Angels toward justice and redemption. Amen.*

Friday, December 7



Text: Daniel 2:19-23

*John Bipes*



Knowing little of the science of dreams and less of 1<sup>st</sup> Testament's book of Daniel (not the least for the cryptic haymaking of Daniel and Revelation by apocalypitics), it's with apprehension to have signed up for this text! Nonetheless, some ancient Danielesue imagery appears relevant. For our times...for Advent 2018.

Firstly; picture Rembrandt's *Belshazzar's Feast*. Surely this writer isn't alone dreaming that some 21<sup>st</sup> century 'writing on the wall' would show up on a wall of an executive mansion known to us all? (In *schadenfreude* we might delight in assigning newsworthy names to those startled faces at the table!) In USAmerica it could be argued that some writing effort – some imaginative dreaming is our civic task; we're hoping (at this October date) that 'wisdom and might' of thanks (vs. 23) will have inspired how we've written 'on the wall' November 6<sup>th</sup>.

Christ-like charity (seasoned with Minnesota 'nice') and an informed neighborly self-interest prompts our wish for a *salvum* of salvation for those in 2018 authority...amongst us 'on earth as it is in heaven'...in contrast to Belshazzar's. And the demise of his kingdom! All 27 books of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Testament point to a larger – a breathtakingly fresh reality. One Daniel glimpsed from afar.

A reality in which our great Nevertheless eclipses ancient understandings – even all mortal dreams – with 'Behold, *I make* all things new.' [Italics added] '*...I make...*' not only beyond our ability to *do* but ours to *dream*. Perhaps especially so when ominous nightmares are made scarier with paralysis of deep sleep. Muscles can't move even when night-visions open doors through which we would run! Rendering us utterly dependent we are upon Another....

...That Spirit Who incarnated our existence with Him in Whom we're already dead in baptism and with Whom we're already raised to life beyond nocturnal delusion, any fear of divine anger or death.

LIFE...with everlasting freedom and Joy.

Sweet dreams!

Saturday, December 8



Text: Ecclesiastes 5:7

*Amy Pehrson*

I am the type of person that can spend a lot of time daydreaming. I like to think about what could happen if I said this, or did that, or didn't do that. Some of that time is helpful to me to think about what a possible future might look like. Sometimes it is just me stewing about something that I can't change. It is good to take the time to think, but God needs us to also do. God's dream for us is to have an active and productive life. We are to do good work using our gifts and strengths.

During this season of Advent, as we sit and listen to the Christmas carols, look at the lights, and think about the past, present and future, let us all be willing and eager to do God's will.

*Dear God, Thank you for sending your Son to show us how to do your work. Help us as we prepare for His arrival to do the things that we are called to do now. Amen.*

Sunday, December 9



Text: Genesis 28:10-22

*Grace Timm*

I think that this passage shows that God's land is everywhere. It also shows that He promises to see a project through. Therefore, if you need his help he will stay with you all the way through.

*Dear God, Help us to remember you are always with us and will always provide for us and always have a plan for us. Amen.*

Monday, December 10



Text: Matthew 1:18-25

*John and Jan Holte*

Joseph's fiancée Mary was pregnant, and not by Joseph. This posed a vexing problem for him. Under Jewish law, this would be considered adultery, and Mary could face execution by stoning (Deut. 22:23-27). So Joseph resolved to spare Mary by dismissing her quietly. But then God intervened. The Holy Spirit was at work. "An angel of the Lord appeared to [Joseph] in a dream" to let him know of God's dream for the world and the role God had for him—with Mary. The child to be born would be the Messiah, God with us, whose birth we celebrate this Christmas season.

There is a wonderful hymn rendering of our text by Carolyn Winfrey Gillette. See [www.carolynshymns.com/joseph\\_heard\\_the\\_troubling\\_news.html](http://www.carolynshymns.com/joseph_heard_the_troubling_news.html)

The concluding stanza may serve as our prayer for today:

*God of love, we too may face times of doubt and trouble.  
May we know your daily grace, even when we struggle.  
Just as Joseph answered, "Yes!" with new dedication,  
We rejoice, for we've been blessed by your incarnation.*

Tuesday, December 11



Text: Deuteronomy 13:1-13

*Emily Bruflat*

I'm guessing you've heard a variation of this question: whom would you invite to a dinner party if you could invite anyone, dead or alive? The options seem endless: your favorite movie/TV/music personalities, experts you've idolized from your field of work, political figures or activists you look up to, etc. What qualities do they possess? Why did they make your list?

This passage from Deuteronomy is warning the Israelites that false gods may be presented to them, even in their dreams. Members of their own families might try to convince them to worship another god. The god of idolatry. Fear. Power. Influence. Wealth. Populism. Greed. This passage takes a violent approach to anyone who "entices" one away from God (13:10). I'm not advocating for literal stoning, but I am humbled when I name the people or possessions that occasionally come before God in my own life.

I think God's dream for us boils down to this: love God first and best, and spread that love beyond all political, religious, racial, and societal boundaries. Would this new spin change your dinner party guest list?

*God of the World,*

*Help me in my daily living to put you above all else. Guide me away from tempting idols, false gods, and the lure of greed and power. Instead of paying attention to the most popular or the best, remind me to live into Christ's focus on compassion and care for "the least" among us. Amen.*

Wednesday, December 12



Text: Genesis 41:1-16

*Gordon Long*

“Nothing happens  
and  
nothing happens,  
and then  
everything happens.”  
(Fay Weldon)

“Times go well,  
or health, or work, or family.  
Then fortunes turn,  
or illness, or bumps, or storms.”  
“So, Pharaoh, and all you who listen,  
Best have gratitude for what surrounds you,  
But best, also, care for what lies ahead.”  
(Joseph, with the many colored coat.)

For, dreams aside,  
You just never know.

*Prayer:*

*Dear Lord,  
If I sit like a lump in church, content with life's goodness,  
help me listen for the one thing I need to hear, then  
Inspire me to try to step toward that one good thing,  
Amen.*

Thursday, December 13



Text: Daniel 2:1-49

*Chad Winterfeldt*

Reading this passage makes me feel like Daniel, in that I want to go in to the king and ask for more time to understand what is going on. It is a long story and requires some patience to figure it out.

Nebuchadnezzar, the bully king, begins by bellowing out orders to his handlers, looking for answers to a dream he's had. Shrewdly, he wants the handlers to tell him the dream first, and then its meaning. *That* would be proof of their magic. The Chaldeans, seeing the trap, ask the king to tell them the dream first and then they will interpret it. No deal, replies the king. They can either give him the full package, or off with their heads. Oddly, Daniel gets involved in this, but he calmly asks for more time, which the king grants. He turns to God, asks for help, and soon has the dream and its meaning in his pocket.

I can't see how the interpretation of the dream would really be of any comfort to Nebuchadnezzar, but then, that's probably not what the story is about. Instead, we are reminded that only God knows the deepest mysteries and that only God can reveal those mysteries to us. We can't discern them by ourselves. Daniel's actions display a trust in God and a wisdom to know when to ask for revelation. The king's response shows gratitude and respect for the power of God.

Last, reading this story reminds me of a stanza from *Spirit of Gentleness* that I've always enjoyed. Here it is:

You call from tomorrow, you break ancient schemes.  
From the bondage of sorrow all the captives dream dreams;  
our women see visions, our men clear their eyes.  
With bold new decisions your people arise.

Friday, December 14



Text: Genesis 40:6-8

*Alex Davig*

Joseph is in jail because his brothers put him there. That stinks and I think anyone would be mad about that, but I like how Joseph still offers to help. He's making the best of things – probably because he knows that he will always be safe with God. I know I can get frustrated trying to do homework or my chores, but faith can help people know that God is always with them even when things aren't going good for them.

Joseph also says that God interprets dreams. I believe that God has big dreams or aspirations for us and that God is always with us, even while we sleep. What is he dreaming for me?

Saturday, December 15



Text: Jeremiah 23:30-32

*Rylee Stadick*

In this passage, the Lord declared that he is “against the prophets who steal from one another words supposedly from me, and lead his people astray with their reckless lies.” At this point in my life, I have not experienced a great deal of being led astray; however, as I think about this passage I can’t help but feel how it relates to the current injustices occurring within humanity right now.

The Lord has taught us to love unconditionally, help your neighbor before helping yourself, and above all to love each other deeply. The Lord has taught us that faith, hope, and love are the most important things we have, but this does not seem to be happening everywhere in the world today. Some people are afraid to love others because they may be different from one another, but that is not what the Lord wants us to do. He has taught us that all people are created equal regardless of age, skin color, gender, race, or beliefs; and this is how we should live our lives. We need to treat everyone as equals to lead lives of purpose and fulfillment.

In closing, I found that these important messages are a result of a passage like Jeremiah 23: 30-32. We need to continue to love one another and follow those who teach us to live in peace with one another, instead of those who lead us astray.

Sunday, December 16



Text: Isaiah 11:1-9

*Mary Spear*

There's a lot going on in these verses from Isaiah. The family tree of Jesse, caring for the poor and meek, wolves and lambs, calves and lions all lying down together. Woody Allen once said: "The wolf shall lie down with the lamb. But the lamb won't get much sleep". This all seems like the impossible dream, doesn't it? I mean, is it even possible that this vision could become reality in the "dog eat dog" nature of our world?

An article I read by David Lose offered a three step process for dreaming bigger dreams during Advent. The first step was to make a "to do" list for Christmas of the various tasks that needed to get done like shopping, cooking, attending concerts, etc. Second was to daydream about what kind of Christmas you wanted or what kind of world you wanted to live in this Christmas and beyond. This could include not only your family but others who are in need. Once you had this dream in your mind, you were to review your "to do" list and circle those tasks that contributed to making your dream Christmas come true.

That seems like a worthwhile task. Just doing this exercise might help put things in greater perspective or allow us to see where something's lacking. And maybe it's enough to make the effort for a more peaceable world, regardless of the outcome.

Prayer: *O come, green shoot of Jesse, free  
Your People from despair and apathy;  
Forge justice for the poor and meek,  
Grant safety for the young ones and the weak,*

*Rejoice, rejoice! Take heart and do not fear,  
God's chosen one, Immanuel, draws near.*

Revised text by Rev. Barbara J. Lundblad  
from hymn "O Come, O Come Emmanuel" ELW 257

Monday, December 17



Text: Isaiah 65:17-25

*Laura Lindell*

A friend told me that as a child she was enthralled to hear of civil rights work by family members. Maureen hoped desperately that “important work” would remain for her, but feared it would all be taken care of by the time she was old enough.

We laughed, of course, at this memory. By the time I knew her, Maureen was a pacifist Quaker doctor who diverted the weapons-purchase portion of her taxes to peacebuilding. We knew that, to quote Marianne Williamson, “in every community, there is work to be done; in every nation, there are wounds to heal” - and that this would remain true all our lives. Though positive changes happen, profound problems persist - and new threats continually pop up. A happy future for all does not feel like the given it once did for Maureen.

Isaiah voiced God’s lament about the state of the world, including the actions of rebellious people who “walk in a way that is not good, following their own devices” (65:2) (I find this wording amusing, given today’s mobile-device technology!), as well as being provocative and self-righteous (verses 3-5.) But starting with verse 65:17, Isaiah voiced this amazing message from God: “I am about to create new heavens and a new earth...Rejoice forever in what I am creating.” Through Isaiah’s vision, God promises that crying, early death, homelessness, hunger, poverty, even natural enmity between predators and prey, will pass away unremembered, replaced by delight and blessing. That’s a future worth dreaming about – and our work for it is still needed. Williamson’s quote above continues, “In every heart, there is the power to do it.” I know that power as the Holy Spirit enabling us to live forward with unrestrained hope.

*Dear God, calm our fears, and re-awaken our trust and anticipation for your new heavens and new earth. Give us courage to move actively into a positive future. In the name of Christ-who-enters-our-human-story, Amen.*

Tuesday, December 18



Text: Micah 4:1-5

*James Dontje*

Micah's dream of weapons remade, literally beaten, into farm tools or instruments of peace, is a powerful vision, even for people who believe that security demands keeping a few weapons unconverted, ready, just in case... But Micah's vision isn't really about converting all the hardware to peaceful tools, but rather about what we can do with those tools--growing food to take care of ourselves and enjoying the fruits of our labors in peace.

While Micah's image of weapons literally becoming tools for farming captures our imagination, the prophet's more powerful dream is that of people at peace, unafraid, "under their own vines and under their own fig trees", satisfied with the fruits of their labors. This connection between food and peace is no idle dream---Nobel Prize winner Amartya Sen won the 1998 Nobel Prize in economics for his work showing that famines were caused more by a lack of peace than by a lack of food.

Our current national, and often contentious, debate about immigration and refugees is presented in terms of fear--fear that immigrants will bring conflict and scarcity into our midst. But consider this: most immigrants are merely trying to follow Micah's vision, looking for a peaceful place where they can live safely and well. If Micah's vision is our vision, are we willing to share the dream?

*God our Creator, help us live Micah's dream and make room for others to share it. Amen.*

Wednesday, December 19



Text: Isaiah 25:6-9

*Bob Stenson*

These words from the prophet Isaiah can help us live with Hope in the midst of a world filled with turmoil. For this is a song of praise for deliverance from oppression. Verse 7 is a startling image of a time when death will be swallowed up forever. It is a picture of God's salvation.

Verse 6 is a vision of a vast banquet that includes all God's people. Verse 9 tells us to rejoice in God's salvation. A new day is coming. In this season of Advent we wait in great anticipation for this new day in the coming of Jesus as Messiah.

In what ways has the Lord been for you a shelter and a hope in these uncertain days?

*Dear God, we thank you for taking care of us each and every day. For you have done wonderful things. Amen.*

Thursday, December 20



Text: Joel 2:28-29

*Paul Aasen*

It has been said, when a disaster of one kind or another comes to our attention, our understanding of God as a God of grace is at risk. When a catastrophic event such as the fires in northern California in this month of November, that destroyed an entire community of 27,000 people (ironically a community named “Paradise”), and resulted in the tragic deaths of more than 50 people (as of the day I am writing this devotion), we face the temptation of coming up with simplistic answers to very difficult questions, basically the “why?” questions. Why do these disasters and tragic deaths occur – where is God in this mess? The false assumption is that bad things won’t happen as long as we do good things. Theologians refer to this as a theology of glory – God is good to us as long as we live good lives. The contrast to this is the theology of the cross – meaning that the salvation gifted to us is found not in our moments of glory but in the moments of our failures – our experience of tragedies – our confessions of sin and need of forgiveness as we kneel at the foot of the cross.

We all at one time or another recited by memory John 3: 16 - “For God so loved the world that He gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life.”

Advent is a very special season of the church year as we await the Hope of God’s salvation – His birth in our lives – thankful that there is still time and space for a lot of good living to the glory of God – not to earn God’s love and grace, but to celebrate the free gift of His everlasting grace.

Friday, December 21



Text: Luke 1:39-45

*Raina Roemhildt*

My middle name is Elisabeth and I am named after the Elizabeth from this exact bible passage. I imagine that while my mom and dad waited for my birth, they dreamt about me, my life and what lay ahead of their soon to be family of three. Like Mary and Elizabeth, my parents waited eagerly - anticipating my birth.

John the Baptist, without knowing the who, the what or the why, leapt for joy in Elizabeth's womb. He must have known something great was going to happen. The unborn child knew that Jesus would save all of mankind and the world. I believe that God has plans for something great to happen to us all.

My parents still have dreams for me: high school, college, a life of being happy and of significance. These dreams are not dissimilar to God's dreams for all his people, the same dreams that John the Baptist realized would come with Jesus' birth...something big, something great.

*Dear God, help me realize that God's dream for me is something big...even great.*

Saturday, December 22



Text: Luke 1:46-55

*Paula Kennedy*

Mary knows her important role in God's plan. She knows her God is personal--just for her--but, also, for ALL generations, ALL peoples. Mary's God knows her heart, and recognizes pure or self-seeking motives, honoring the humble heart. Her God knows her fears, able to control rulers and circumstances. (Isn't that reassuring?!) Mary's God knows her needs and is forever faithful, as promised.

Wow! This truly captures my 'bottom line' of Christianity! Why do I get so wrapped up in the troubles of our uncertain and fear-laden world? God is so much more worthy of my attention and focus! And...there is a bonus!... God extends mercy and power for us to be His people no matter what! Help is there! Joy is there! Eternal life is there!

*Thank-you, God! I am grateful and joyous to put my trust in You!*

Sunday, December 23



Text: Luke 1:67-79

*Pat Pehrson*

As I read this passage I find myself thinking about what is really being said here. The prophecy Zacharias, father of John the Baptist spoke concerning Christ the Lord. God would reveal that Zacharias and Elizabeth would have a son and name him John. Zacharias was unable to speak until the birth of his son John. He couldn't fully comprehend all that Christ was trying to perform, and like us, we cannot comprehend or understand fully what we have in him. When I do, I will then rejoice for the good news that will come! I sometimes cannot comprehend all that I have in Christ and all that waits for me but when my life is through, I can certainly face him and rejoice with him my relationship with him.

God's visitation to redeem the people. I always amazed that the lord would have come to pardon our sin and stand amazed that the lord is mindful of all sinners such as we all are.

God's redemption is to forgive our sins

God's salvation raised up a horn of salvation. We stood condemned and separated, hopeless with our sin. Christ came to redeem and pardon us, and doing this we could never do.

God's compassion to save us from our enemies and from all that the hate we have received underserved from him who has shown great compassion on those who were unworthy.

God's reception that he would grant unto us our enemies and to serve them without fear. God allows us to serve him and live for him.

The birth of Christ stands as the defining moment by which modern time is measured. This moment is the key to world history.

God's plan is to give us knowledge of salvation and not to suffer, perish but we should all come to repent.

God's peace is the light that has never grown dim or gone out. We are living in a dark and sinful world and yet there is hope and peace in Christ. I rejoice that I have seen the light, being eternally delivered from darkness.

This Christmas season brings images of the Babe in a manger, sheep, Shepherds, Angels, and Wise men. These are all beautiful, but Christmas reveals so much more. In His birth, Christ came to fulfill the plan of God, the redemption of mankind. This was done for you and me. As we celebrate Christmas, I pray we are reminded of the Mighty, Merciful, and Gracious Lord who made provision for us!

Monday, December 24



Text: Matthew 2:9-12

*Rebekah and Gabriela Roemhildt*

I read this passage with my mom, and I like how the wise men saw the star and they realized that it was brighter and that it was important. They knew something good was going to happen. I think that's Faith. Faith led them to Jesus. If we have faith, good things can happen.

I remember when we were traveling in our RV and mom and dad home-schooled us. They were really excited about all the things we were going to see but my sister and I didn't believe them. One day we were doing our homework on a picnic table and just then a herd of bison walked by! Something good happened to us because mom and dad had faith.

A dream told the wise men not to return. God sent a prayer to them by way of dream. I think that's kind of what happened to us too. We moved to Saint Peter because we just knew that it was right. God's dream for us is to have a happy life. We can get through tough times because he knows that we have strength.

Jesus is the sign of good and when he died he died for his people. He has dreams for us and we should have faith in him so that good things can happen – like seeing those bison and living in Saint Peter!

*Jesus – I have faith in you and I will follow what you dream for me.*

Tuesday, December 25



Text: Matthew 2:13-15

*Barb Wilkinson*

Today we celebrate the birth of Jesus, who was sent to show us grace, forgiveness, and hope. Yet the text for today does not reflect that kindness. It tells about Jesus being persecuted and in danger of being killed by Herod, the king. Joseph realizes in a dream that his young son is in mortal danger and that he, Jesus, and Mary have to flee to safety. They walk by night and day and finally find refuge in Egypt. Jesus, Mary, and Joseph are Refugees.

As I am writing this, thousands of scared, persecuted women, men, and children are Refugees, walking from Guatemala, Honduras and Mexico to a place where they hope to find safety from danger, gang violence, and deprivation. To them, the United States is their "Egypt". Their dreams give them hope for a better future. Yet they are greeted by security guards, soldiers, and border walls, not by a welcoming place of respite.

Jesus came to us, the oppressed, the downtrodden, the anxious, the lonely. We are refugees, too. It was God's plan to save Jesus from Herod's threats so that we can be saved.

*Dear God, open our hearts wide so that we can receive your love and grace. Let us pass on your love and kindness to refugees who cry out for help. Let us find ways to feed and house them, and be reunited with family members. Let us welcome wandering strangers as we would welcome Christ into our homes and hearts. We thank you for the gift of your son. Amen*

*Merry  
Christmas!*

*Remember, Christmas lasts twelve days...*