

2015

**Based on Readings from the Gospel according to
St. Mark**

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ADVENT READINGS

Advent Readings 2014

These readings and meditations are based on readings from the Gospel According to St Mark, the New Revised Standard Version. Find the texts in your Bible and read them from there.

The bracketed readings are in addition and optional.

The first three weeks of readings are from chapter one of Mark. Beginning the fourth Sunday the readings are taken from chapters twelve to sixteen. The texts are not based on the lectionary but instead are taken by choice of the writer. If you have young children you should read them first so that you can choose and change how you use these readings with your children. Enjoy! May God bless your conversations.

First Sunday in Advent. *Mark 1:1. The beginning of the good news of Jesus Christ, the Son of God.*

(Genesis 1:1-2:3, and/or John 1:1-5.)

Beginnings are important. How did you begin your day? A big yawn? Wide awake? Did you shout, "A new day? Great!" Name some beginnings in your life - some back in the past and some very recent. Start with thinking of one beginning "back in the past". The first day of school or a vacation. Tell one another about that beginning and why it was important.

This day is the first Sunday in Advent, the beginning of the Advent season. Advent means, "He comes." We think about Christ's coming to us in the past, in the future and in this day. How has or how might Jesus come in a new way to you today?

We will read "The Gospel According to Mark" for Advent. Mark tells us right at the beginning of his story about Jesus, that this is "The beginning" of the whole story. In the days to come we will learn more about what Mark means.

Prayer: We thank you All Holy and Surprising God that Jesus has come to make a new beginning between you and each one of us. Help us to learn from Mark. Make new beginnings in our understanding of you. Make new beginnings for people who suffer from the violence of poverty or of natural disaster. We thank and bless you for your love. Amen.

First Monday in Advent

(Romans 8:31-39)

Mark 1:1.

Good news makes us feel better. It gives a sense of security, wellbeing or happiness. In 1945 people heard on the radio, "The war is over." Good news! Or a friend is told "The job is yours." Good news! Another, "Your illness is not serious." Good news! And when I asked, "Will you marry me?" she said, "Yes!" Good news! Think of your own good news examples and share them now.

The season of Advent reminds us that Christmas is more than decorations and gifts. It reminds us of the special gift the world received at Christmas. That gift is Jesus. We sing about him in songs like "Away in a Manger." Remember that hymn? Sing it.

Mark says that Jesus' coming is the good news. It's good news because Jesus has come to set us free from sin which makes us so self-centred. He has come to invite us to be children of God, to follow and walk with him in God's kingdom.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, you have truly brought good news in the person of Jesus. He takes us by the hand and says to us, "Come and meet your heavenly Father." That is good news. We come today with thanks. Thank you for Jesus. Thank you for your love. Amen.

First Tuesday in Advent

(Matthew 1:18-25, Isaiah 49:14-16.)

Mark 1:1.

Names are important. What is your name? Mine is Telmor. I'm a pastor. I try to "tell more" good news. Does your name have a meaning? Who gave you your name?

God knows you by name. He says, "[*put your name here*], I know you, I forgive you, I have carved you on my hand. I love you. I will be with you always. Jesus is the promise of that."

One name we all know is the most important name in the whole world. It's the name of a person who's coming and whose birthday we remember during Advent and at Christmas. I am thinking about Jesus.

Our Advent verse, the verse we have read each day so far, underlines the name of Jesus. Mark says that what he is writing is "The beginning of the good news of Jesus Christ." So Mark is saying that Jesus is not only a person. He is "good news," or as another translation puts it, he is "gospel." Gospel - good news.

Prayer: God of love and mercy, you have given us good news in the Bible. You have given us good news through Mark. We love that good news. It is about Jesus. Help all people to hear about him and to be able to say "Yes!" to his call to follow. Amen.

First Wednesday in Advent

Mark 1:1. (Psalm 23)

A daughter is very special. A son is very special. When my wife and I had our first child I was lost for words. I was so happy. I thanked her and I thanked God. All I could say was "Thank you for the little girl." What a gift!

All of us are sons or daughters. We learn that we are important. Moms, dads, relatives and friends tell us so. Name some of these people. How do they say "You are important?"

Advent tells us about a very important Son, Jesus. He was God's Son. He knew he was very important to God. God loved him and gave him a special purpose. He sent him to be our Friend and our Saviour. Because of Jesus we are children of God, loved and cared for. Can you put into words why and how Jesus is important to you?

Mark saves these words for the end of his first sentence. His writing is about "The beginning of the good news of Jesus Christ, the Son of God." This Advent season we celebrate the coming of this Good News person, Jesus Christ, the Son of God.

Prayer: Dear Father, help us to live out this good news of Jesus this Advent season. We watch for signs of His presence each day. Help us to share our experiences with Jesus and to tell others about this person, our Friend and Saviour. Amen.

First Thursday in Advent

Mark 1:2-3

(Isaiah 40:3-5)

When I was a boy there was no television and no computers. Few families had phones. Messages were sent by telegraph. In the cities, uniformed messenger riding bikes delivered the messages. How do we give and receive messages today?

The Pastor is a messenger. The Pastor tells us over and over again that God loves us, and that God has hopes and dreams for us. The Pastor tells us that Jesus is the sign of God's love and that we are to love one another. These messages come from beyond, from God. The Pastor is just the messenger.

Mark tells us that God announced through Isaiah, an Old Testament prophet that an important message would soon be coming to the people of Israel. He would tell people to "Be ready! The Lord is coming. His name was John.

Advent is such a time. The Pastor tells us to get ready for Christ's coming, for Christmas as it is meant to be - a celebration of Christ's birth, not a party of more stuff than we need. Talk about how will you celebrate that birth this year?

Prayer: God Almighty, thank you for seeing that the message is preached, that the story is told. Help us all to hear it. Help us to shape our lives around that message. Help us to shape our lives around Jesus and what he has done for us. Amen.

First Friday in Advent

Mark 1:4-6.

(Acts 9:1-23 the big “turn around”)

The text says, “John the Baptizer appeared.” Describe John’s appearance. What did he look like? How was he dressed? What did he eat? Imagine hearing about this strange man from some of your friends. Would you go out of town to see or hear him?

The text says that people came from all over to hear him, and that after hearing him many were baptized by John.

John’s sermons seem harsh; but he was talking to people that needed a harsh voice to wake them up to some very grace-filled good news. He told them they had their backs to God and were living and walking away from God. He said, “Repent!” which means “turn around.” Go toward God rather than away. Turn from self to God. Many did and were baptized. They were saying “I want to face and follow God.”

In Advent we read the John the Baptist texts to remind us to get ready for the coming celebration of the birth of Jesus and his coming again. John calls us to “Repent,” to turn around from going our own way and to follow God who will come to us in the manger.

Prayer Holy Spirit, help us to see where we must turn around, where we too must repent and ask God to forgive us. Help us to be better followers and servants of Jesus. Amen.

First Saturday in Advent

Mark 1:7-8.

Luke 1:57-80)

The star of the game was being interviewed. He is a great player. People come to to watch him play. Each time he is interviewed he points to coach and team and not himself.

John the Baptist is like that. He had many people coming to hear and see him. But he pointed to Jesus. John says, “He must increase, I must decrease.” Jesus is the important one. I am here to point to Jesus. John is a good model. Our faith is in Jesus, not in another or ourselves. He is Lord and Saviour.

But John has something else to say. His baptism has limits. It just calls us to repent. But Jesus baptizes us with water and the Holy Spirit. In baptism we hear these words: “You have been sealed by the Holy Spirit and marked with the cross of Christ forever.” Forever is a long time; but sealed and marked by God makes it possible. Never forget being marked and sealed in this way. It is the greatest gift you have ever received. And soon we will once again celebrate the birth of the one who made it all possible, Jesus Christ our Sovereign and Saviour.

Prayer O God our Father, we marvel at your goodness toward us. We thank you for John the Baptist who points us past ourselves and back to Jesus. We thank you for the Holy Spirit who works faith in us and helps us walk in that faith, in Jesus’ name. Amen.

Second Sunday in Advent

(Romans 6:1-4)

Mark 1:9-11.

I had sign for my sons when they registered for hockey. I said with pride and thanksgiving, “These are my sons.” That was their baptism into organized hockey.

Jesus came to be baptized by John. He was baptized in the Jordan River. His Father was there also. When Jesus came up out of the water he and those around him heard a voice saying, “You are my Son.” The voice called Jesus, “the Beloved.”

In my ministry as pastor I have watched many parents bring children for baptism. I see pride and thanksgiving for the precious gift of a child. In baptism they turn the child over to God. God says, “I am your Father. You are my child.” It is like the River Jordan again. The Pastor announces, *“In Holy Baptism our gracious heavenly Father frees us from sin and death by joining us to the death and resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ. We are born children of a fallen humanity; by water and the Holy Spirit we are reborn children of God.”* (ELW p.227)

That is amazing. God is acting, doing something for us that we cannot do for ourselves.

Prayer: Gracious God, you make us your children in baptism. By the Holy Spirit keep us in the faith that says “Yes!” to you. Help us to live close to you, in Jesus’ name. Amen

Second Monday in Advent Mark 1:12-13.

(Hebrews 4:14-16)

Mark says the Spirit drove Jesus out into the wilderness. What is the wilderness? A place without people? An area unmapped? What do you think? Share what you think.

The wilderness spoken of is a barren land, a place where few things grow and few familiar animals live. You had better take supplies when you go out into the wilderness. There is no shelter from the sun by day or cold by night. There is no food for hunger or water to quench your thirst. But most important, in ancient story, the desert was the home of evil.

So why did the Spirit almost force Jesus out into the wilderness? To test him? What was the experience like - for forty days? What do you think?

Mark says Jesus was tested by Satan, he lived with the beasts, and angels cared for him. Another writer says that Jesus endured every temptation and trial that is known to humans, yet without sinning. The perfect one is tested more severely than we will ever be tested.

Prayer Most gracious Father, we marvel at the wilderness testing Jesus had to endure. We thank and praise you that even there Jesus defeated Satan, as he has as our Saviour. Help us to live and walk with Him. We pray in his name. Amen.

Second Tuesday in Advent Mark 1:14-15.
(Deuteronomy 6:4-9; Matthew 22:34-40)

John the Baptist was not long on the scene. Those in authority did not like his talk of a new kingdom. They did not like his talk about the new One coming. John was arrested.

Some people in some other lands are treated the same way. If they talk about Jesus and the kingdom of God they can be arrested, and even put to death. Why might this happen?

The Gospel sets people free to love one another, to serve God, and to work for peace and justice for all. They are no longer in bondage to those who want to oppress and use them.

Bullying is a form of bondage that some of us have experienced. Someone wants to control us. Have you or a friend of yours experienced bullying?

In Jesus' kingdom there is to be no bullying. In Christ we are free to be sisters and brothers of Christ and one another. There is no hierarchy among humans. In Christ we are equal. (Gal 3:28)

Prayer Holy Spirit, guide and direct us so that we may serve our Lord Jesus in the kingdom of God. Bless our preparations for Christmas, in Jesus' name. Amen.

Second Wednesday in Advent Mark 1:14-15.
(Hebrews 1:1-3)

Jesus picked up where John had left off. He says four things; "The time is fulfilled," "The kingdom of God has come near," "repent," and "believe in the good news."

In one word, *who* is the good news? In one sentence, what is the good news? It is this: *God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son that whoever believes in him may have life now and forever and forever.* (John3.16)

Repent? Look no further for someone to follow. Turn to Jesus. Believe? Ask the Holy Spirit to help you let Jesus be the centre of your life.

To believe means to trust. The believer does not trust in believing but in Jesus. The Holy Spirit who calls us to believe and gives us faith. (See Small Catechism, Creed, Article three explanation.)

Two sentences: 1) I believe my team is the best team, and 2) I believe in Jesus. Discuss the meaning of believe in both of these. What is the relationship between believe and faith?

Prayer Lord Jesus, we believe in you. Holy Spirit, enable us to be at peace over the good news about God's love in Jesus. Help us O Spirit to know we belong to God forever and ever. Let that truth affect how we live. In Jesus name we pray. Amen.

Second Thursday in Advent

(Genesis 12:1-9)

Mark 1:16-20.

When I was a boy my Mom would call when it was time to do dishes. “Follow me to the dishpan Telmor.” I might be in the middle of game with friends but out came the call, “Telmor!” And I had to go. Do you know what I mean?

Mark tells of the call of Jesus to four of the apostles. He simply says, “Follow Me.” And they follow him. All four are doing something very important. They are fishermen looking after their nets. They have a career, a history and future in fishing. Why let their lives be disrupted? But they go. They follow.

There was something very compelling about my mother’s voice when she called me to help with the dishes. I knew she meant it. I knew the consequences of saying “No.”

But in this text I don’t hear threat. There was something very compelling about the man and the invitation. They had to go. They were driven from the inside to say “Yes!” Did they ever have second thoughts?

How is Jesus saying to you and to us today, “Follow me!”

Prayer Dear Jesus, speak clearly to us. By the Holy Spirit enable us to hear you and follow you when you call. We are children of God. We pray in your name. Amen.

Second Friday in Advent

(Luke 1:39-56)

Mark 1:21-28.

Jesus was a teacher from the beginning of his ministry. A teacher was and is an authority figure. In our experience they help us to learn. Name a teacher who has helped you learn. Did that teacher also help you to learn how to live?

What Jesus taught upset some people and astounded others. Note verse fifteen again. It is a summary of the whole of Mark. What did Jesus teach according to verse fifteen? Why would people be upset? What did he say that threatened people?

This reading also tells us that even the unclean spirits knew who Jesus was. They feared him. They knew he spoke with authority. They knew that he had the power to deal with them, to cast them out of the people made ill by them.

Remember again that this is Advent. We are preparing to celebrate the birth of Jesus. But if we are really to celebrate his birth, what will it mean for us this year? Can Jesus become the authority figure in our life?

Prayer God Almighty, help us by your Holy Spirit to hear and see Jesus as we read Mark’s Gospel. Enable us to live under the authority of Jesus, whatever that may mean for each one of us. We pray in Jesus name. Amen.

Second Saturday in Advent
(1 Corinthians 12:1-13)

Mark 1:29-31

Are there some people you visit more than others? Can you name them? Are they your good friends? Maybe they are also helpful to you in your daily living.

In the reading for this day Jesus went to the home of two of his followers, two he had recently invited to follow him. He was welcomed.

But Jesus found a problem there. Peter's mother-in-law was ill and in bed with a fever. Jesus was moved in his heart to help her. He took her hand, lifted her up, and she was better. Note she immediately got on with her everyday life. That in a way is thankful living; get on with your everyday life.

What is your everyday life? How do you "get on with it"?

Prayer Dear Jesus, you were so present to people in this Gospel according to Mark. Be present to us today so that in our heart and mind we may know your presence and walk with you as servants and disciples. Help us to know what this means. We pray this in your name. Amen.

Third Sunday in Advent
(Matthew 8:28-34)

Mark 1:32-34.

Can you imagine the whole city gathered at the door to Peter's house? Why did they come? What did they want?

The text talks about demons, beings rebellious towards God and hostile to human wholeness. People were afraid and helpless. Jesus showed himself able to deliver people from the power of demons. Today we might say that anything that draws us from the worship of God or causes us to hurt ourselves and others is a demon. We say, "Jesus rid us of the demons."

However, we also leave room for the Biblical use of the word. Some churches have a ministry of exorcism; that is a minister called and trained to "exorcise – get rid of demons in people. A movie from the seventies, The Exorcist, portrayed this cause.

Healing people with all kinds of illness and disability is something Jesus did over and over again. We pray that he will help us with the healing we need and enable us to be agents of healing in our own time. How might that work for you?

Prayer Gracious God and Father, you have made us your own through Christ Jesus. Protect us from those experiences and people in life that would take our eyes from you and mess up our lives. In Christ's name we pray. Amen.

Third Monday in Advent

(Romans 8:26-27)

Mark 1:35-36.

One writer says that prayer is conversation with God. Our text says that Jesus got up early to pray, to have that conversation with God.

Think of prayer as conversation. What are some of the things that happen in a conversation? Do conversations shape our lives? In what way do they do so?

The same writer says also that prayer is the breath of the soul. How is that different from conversation? Think about prayer as conversation and prayer as the breath of the soul. How do you experience prayer in these ways?

But finally, Jesus went to a deserted place to pray. He wanted to be alone with God. Is that a good idea? Look at Matthew 6:1-8. Maybe praying with others and praying alone are both needed. However, alone with God we do not need to say nice prayers for the hearing of others. We can be candid and honest-to-God.

Prayer Gracious God we have so many things on our minds that get in the way of prayer. Yet, these are the very things about which we need to pray. Help us, Holy Spirit, to pray as we can even if it is not as we ought. Breathe life into us in our prayers. We ask this in Jesus' name.

Third Tuesday in Advent

(Matthew 5:1-16)

Mark 1:37-39.

Simon and his companions were caught up in the interest and excitement of the crowds. They told Jesus, "Everyone is searching for you." Or in other words, come and join the crowd. We've got something going here.

But, alas, Jesus is not here just to please the crowd. Nor is he here to be popular. He had a purpose more important. He would stay on that track. He had a message to give and a life purpose to fulfill and he would do that.

Do we worry about success or popularity? Do we compare ourselves, our pastor, our church with others? Would it not be great to be "successful" *like* some others?

Jesus by his actions demonstrates that it is more important to be faithful than to be successful in human terms.

What does that mean for us today as a congregation, a family and as individuals?

Prayer God of power and might, God of message and grace, help us to be faithful as disciples and children in the kingdom. Help us to know what that means and to do it. We pray this in the name of Jesus. Amen

Third Wednesday in Advent

Mark 1:40

(John 8:1-11)

Lepers knew what it meant to be alone. They were terribly alone. They had to keep their distance from other people. They were outcasts in their own families. Once you got leprosy you no longer had a life. The change was very drastic and dramatic.

The leper in this story had already heard about Jesus. He was desperate for help. He wanted to return to a normal life, to his work, to his family. He had nothing to offer in return. All he could do was come to Jesus, kneel and beg for help.

He knew where to turn. So do we; but we often try to go our own way, to heal ourselves, to help ourselves out of some kind of mental or psychological hole we have dug for ourselves. When we know we need help, all we have to do is ask. to Jesus will give the help we need – maybe not exactly in the way we want it but in his good time and his good way.

Have you had this kind of experience? Share it.

Prayer Dear Jesus, we marvel at your patience with us, and your willingness to help even before we ask. Keep us from trying to live our lives apart from you. We ask this in your name. Amen.

Third Thursday in Advent

Mark 1:41-42.

(Luke 8:43-48)

Jesus has big ears. Well, that's not quite true; but it is a way of saying that he has very good hearing. He hears anyone who calls or comes to him. What a gift that is for the rest of us. It means we can tell him anything and he will hear.

Do you know someone with "big ears," a good listener? Are you a good listener?

Jesus stretched out his hand and touched the leper. That was even more than others would do. But he also healed him. He said, "I do choose. Be made clean."

The leper expected that Jesus would hear. But imagine his surprise when he was healed. Maybe leprosy-eaten fingers returned to wholeness. Possibly his skin was again smooth, no longer marred by the sores of leprosy. But most of all, he could return to life as it was before the disease took hold of him.

Remember this story. Take it into all of your life. Jesus hears. Jesus heals.

Prayer Almighty God, use your gentle healing power that we find in Jesus to heal our wounds, our hurts and our scars. Help us to give them to you and await your healing. We pray this in Jesus name. Amen.

Third Friday in Advent Mark 1:43-44
(Luke 19:1-10)

How important is the healing itself? Why did Jesus tell the leper to be silent?

Miracles have a way of attracting our attention. To be healed of something as nasty as leprosy can be a wonderful experience. But our thanksgiving over the healing may turn into forgetting the one who healed us. The healing may become more important to us than the healer or our calling as followers of Jesus.

It is good to be thankful to God for daily life and all its good gifts. But it is equally important to praise the giver and not make so much of the gifts themselves.

Take wealth for example. To be wealthy is okay but it is not good that we simply hoard our wealth, protect it and gloat over it saying, “Look how much I have.” Better that we sell all we have and give it to the poor, so Jesus says to the wealthy man in the Gospels. The same is true of our talents and gifts – not there for our own boasting and glory, but instead for serving our Lord in serving others. Our” wealth” is to be shared.

Prayer God who heals us of all our ailments, heal us now. Help us to live centred in Christ our Lord, and thereby as your children, rather than as people centred on their good fortune and the gifts you have given. We pray this in Jesus’ name. Amen.

Third Saturday in Advent Mark 1:45.
(Matthew 16:21-23; 17:22-23; 20:17-19)

Several times in the Gospels Jesus asks people to be quiet about the good thing that has happened to them because of him. Be thankful, yes! But get on with ordinary life. Don’t start a circus of events. Tell the story of the person, Jesus.

One would think that the publicity would be good. It would draw attention to Jesus. But what often happens is that people will get excited about what Jesus does rather than who Jesus is, about what happened rather than the one who made it happen. Who he is, is more important than what he did.

Furthermore, the time was not right to reveal too much about his identity. Once again the advent theme appears. Be patient. Wait! Let things happen in God’s good time. That is something the leper was not prepared to do.

So how do we get ready for Christmas? It’s a pretty big event in our lives - excitement and anticipation. What’s really important. Without being people who sour the season, what is to be our way of life this Advent season? What do you think?

Prayer Holy Spirit, help us in our conversation and witness so that we say and do those things that give the glory to God for who God is and not for the deeds themselves. We need that kind of help. That’s why we pray again in Jesus name. Amen.

Fourth Sunday in Advent

(I John 4:7-12)

Mark 12:28-34.

Important stories come in small packages. Here is one of them. Once again there is an attempt to catch Jesus off guard. It is toward the end of his ministry. He is a bother to those who are in control. So a scribe, asks about the commandments and if one is greater than the other. Jesus names two.

If we take this text to heart then we are bound to love God above everyone and everything; and we are bound to love the neighbour as we would love ourselves. Those two statements are very simple. But what about living them out in daily life?

I think John Vanier, the founder of l'Arche, has taken this text to heart. I think of many others about whom I say the same.

I will sound like a teacher now, but here's a little exercise for you. Write three statements about what it means to love the Lord your God in the way the text says. Following that, write three things about the second part of the reply of Jesus. Finally, write three things about what it means for you to love you?.

Prayer: God our Father, we are to love with heart, soul, mind and strength. Help us to do so. Holy Spirit, lead us so that we can freely do what is commanded. We pray this in Jesus name. Amen.

Fourth Monday in Advent

(Malachi 3:8-12; Matthew 19:13-22)

Mark 12:41-44.

You have heard of people who gave millions of dollars to a university or school. Some people give a thousand dollars a week in the offering plate at church; some one hundred dollars; some fifty. It does not hurt them. There is still lots more where that came from.

The widow in the story gave everything she had. It was not much; but Jesus used her giving as a measure of what our own giving should and can be like.

Think about your own giving. You might want to keep your thoughts to yourself; but think about it. Does it come remotely close to the widow's gift? A tithe, usually regarded as a tenth, is just the beginning in Scripture. What can we do beyond?

And if you are a child, what is it that you have to give? I can think of four things right off the top of my head? Can you? Name them.

Prayer Gracious and life giving God; we hang on to so much and gather so much. In this season before Christmas, this season of Advent, help us to look at our own giving. Inspire us and enable us to be better stewards of our time, our talents and our treasure. We pray this in Jesus' name. Amen.

Fourth Tuesday in Advent

(Revelation 21:1-4)

Mark 13:32-37

I laughed when a pastor friend some years ago said he had all his funerals scheduled for the next year. You can put anything else on the calendar, even way ahead of time. But accidents and funerals come most often as surprise.

Jesus came when least expected. People were unaware of the great gift God was providing. Seers from the east were watching. The shepherds got the message. No others waited.

In Advent we remember that Jesus came to us long ago. In Advent we remember that he comes to us each day of our lives, often in surprising ways. In Advent we remember that he said he is coming again. That is the coming we watch for. That is the coming for which we wait. We don't even know what it will be like, but we watch and wait.

Meanwhile, what are we to do? Live! Live as children of God and disciples of Jesus. Plant a tree, says Luther. Serve one another and others, and so serve God. Tell the story as only you can tell the story of Jesus and God's love.

Prayer Heavenly giver of grace; enable us by your Holy Spirit to expect Christ's return, even day by day. Help us to live as your children so that we are not found to be only self-centred and asleep at life. We pray in Jesus name. Amen.

Christmas Eve

Luke 2:1-14

(Matthew 1:18-25)

This is the eve for which we have been waiting. Expectation and hope come to a point at this time. We celebrate in worship the birth of Jesus. We do that today and we do that tomorrow.

Today we find our celebration in the reading about census, angels and shepherds. The church is full. Families are gathered. Children are restless, watching and waiting. Hymns and texts go to the heart. We greet one another in earnest, hoping for a merry (blessed, wholesome and meaningful) Christmas.

What do you like best about Christmas Eve? Has your waiting and watching been for The Gift in the manger? I know there has been some waiting for the gifts under the tree? Probably we are truthful in saying "Both!"

Make an "I am thankful for ..." list and write at least three things for which you are thankful at this time of the year. As you make your list, remember especially the One we have been talking about and waiting for.

Prayer We rejoice, O God, in the gift of a Saviour, Jesus our Lord. We rejoice, O Jesus, in your coming to live among us. We rejoice, O Holy Spirit, in your presence to build us up in the faith given to us in Christ Jesus our Lord. We pray this in Jesus name. Amen.

Christmas Day *John 1:1-5, 10-14.*
(Jeremiah 31:31-34)

If you have not memorized these marvellous words, do it now. There are not that many; but they are so powerful in their content and meaning.

Word in this text seems to be a person. This person has been around for a long time, even before time began. The babe born in a manger has been around forever and will be around forever.

Spend time meditating on this text and all its parts. Read it carefully and slowly, finding answers to these questions:

What are some of the pieces to John's image of Jesus, the Word?

What clues does John give to the relationship between this Word and God?

What do John's ideas do to our celebration of the birth of Christ Jesus?

Sing a favourite and simple carol.

Prayer God of song and rejoicing; our hearts sing and rejoice this day. We celebrate with angels, shepherds and seers. We rejoice with Mary and Joseph at the birth of Jesus. We pray in the name of this child born to be our Saviour and Sovereign. Amen.