

Incarnate Glory



Advent **DEVOTIONAL GUIDE**

Northway Church

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Northway Church

The season of Advent is historically a rich time of contemplation and celebration for the church. Formed from the Latin word meaning “arrival,” Advent is the traditional celebration of the first advent of Jesus and the anticipation of His promised second coming, an advent of glory.

Many people, whether rooted in faith or not, have used an Advent calendar. Often these calendars are filled with candies or little gifts counting down to Christmas Day. While Advent is certainly about remembering and rejoicing the coming of our Messiah, we often get distracted by the ways of the world in the midst of the holiday hustle and bustle. What we generally have called “Advent” is far from how the Church historically observed the season.

This small guide is meant to help you embrace the true story of the gospel in our lives, specifically focusing on the Incarnate Glory of Jesus Christ while we watch and wait for his promised return. Your Northway Staff have written some weekly devotions to help guide you through this season as we fix our eyes on Jesus.

Jesus Above Us

¹⁵He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation.

¹⁶For by him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things were created through him and for him. ¹⁷And he is before all things, and in him all things hold together. ¹⁸And he is the head of the body, the church. He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in everything he might be preeminent. ¹⁹For in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell, ²⁰and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, making peace by the blood of his cross.

Colossians 1:15-20

DEVOTIONAL

Week 1

Week 1 - Jesus Above Us

When we open our Bibles, we sit not merely among words, but with God himself. He communicates with us through his Word, yes. But he does more than that, he communes with us.

Wanting to enjoy every ounce of access that I have, I like to spend my time with Jesus in the Gospels. And when I do so, I am in holy company.

When I look into Jesus' face—the one who offered drink and redemption to the harlot, who fed five thousand of my hungry friends, who both trod on and stilled the waves—I look into the face of God.

The Creator of all. The Sustainer of all. The Purpose and Power behind all.

The One who is unimaginably above us—let's look into his face and see human eyes radiating love back into our own.

Oh to stare down the beautiful, maddening mystery of God in the flesh.

You see, transcendence meets humility in the person of Jesus. Never before and never again will humanity witness such a cosmic shifting combination. The One who knit all, knows all and is all came to earth as a babe.

More potent than the splitting of an atom, the ushering in of Jesus, the God man, not only changed eternity, it was stunningly beautiful to behold.

When the King came down, he did not cease to be King.

Though he clothed himself in human flesh, the weight of his majesty is no lighter.

Though he took on our sufferings, the immensity of his holy joy abounds greater still.

Though he was laid in a grave, he stands now at the right hand of the Father.

For as the grave brought light to his resurrection power, so too does the humility of his incarnation illuminate all the more his awe-inspiring transcendence.

He is above us.

So sit with Jesus in his Word. Stare into his human face and behold the full breadth of God's love, remembering that in him, the fullness of God was pleased to dwell.

For in knowing the truth of his transcendence, lies the deepening of our ever increasing awe towards God.

He is infinitely above us. And yet he came down to love us.

Knowing the height at which our lover descended allows us to see the immeasurable love with which we are lavished.

*“Though He
took on our
sufferings,
the immensity
of His holy
joy abounds
greater still.”*



FAMILY GUIDE

Suggested Reading

Preschool - N/A

Elementary - Colossians 1:15-16

We're about to celebrate a season in the church called Advent. Advent is what we call the weeks leading up to Christmas! During this special time, we remember how Jesus came to the earth as a baby as a part of God's plan to rescue his people.

But before we tell this story, one you've maybe heard before, we should start by remembering who Jesus is.

You see, that baby in the manger wasn't just ANY baby. You've probably met some cute babies before! Maybe you have a little brother or sister that you love so much. Or maybe you've seen some babies at church on the way to your classroom. Just a few years ago, you were a baby too!

Jesus was like these babies because he was totally human! He had tiny little toes just like them. He had a brain that learned new things like shapes and

colors, just like them. And yes, he had stinky diapers like them too. Yuck!

But something about Jesus was very, very special. Because, yes, he was completely human, but he was also completely God!

This might be confusing and that's okay! Jesus is so amazing that sometimes our small brains have a hard time understanding how it could all be true!

Jesus never stopped being God, even when he came to earth to be born as a baby. And that is very good news because an ordinary baby wouldn't be able to rescue anyone from sin! As we celebrate Advent and Christmas, we should remember that Jesus is God, and so he is worthy of our love and trust!

Jesus Like Us

²...complete my joy by being of the same mind, having the same love, being in full accord and of one mind. ³Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves. ⁴Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others. ⁵Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, ⁶who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, ⁷but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. ⁸And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.

Philippians 2:2-8

DEVOTIONAL

Week 2

Week 2- Jesus Like Us

I'm about to spoil almost every action movie ever: someone's in trouble. Good guy struggles against insurmountable odds to save the person in trouble. It looks like all hope is lost. But wait! Good guy figures it out and saves the person in trouble. Rejoice! Add in a love story and you might even win an Oscar.

Rotate the actors and actresses, add some CGI effects, change the setting, and you have the action movie template. Surely we would be tired of the same story after the first 100 movies like this, right? But we're not. We love it! We can't get enough. Why is that?

Here's why. Deep inside every human heart is a desire to be rescued. We know things aren't the way they're supposed to be. We know that we aren't the way we're supposed to be. We long for things to be made right. As much as we try, we can't fix it ourselves. We need to be rescued!

But what else do we love? Ourselves. *We* want to be

the rescuer. *We* want to be the hero. *We* want the glory!

So we try. And then we try again. And then we try some more. Let me try that one thing one more time. Maybe a new job will fix things. People might notice me if I change my profile picture. A new city might change my luck. Yet we're still stuck—with *us*.

Then, the inevitable moment comes. We realize that no matter how many life-hacks we try or how many things we change, we're still in need of rescue. We realize that *we're* the problem. We need to be rescued, and as much as we try, we can't rescue ourselves.

This is the beauty of Advent. The best Rescuer the world has ever seen comes on the scene.

Instead of bringing the latest weapons and the largest army, this Rescuer “emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men.”

Instead of activating a superpower, this Rescuer “humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.” Why? Because our Rescuer had to become like us so that we could be with him. God became man so that man could be with God.

Saint Augustine sums up the beautiful paradox of the Incarnation:

“Man’s maker was made man that He, Ruler of the stars, might nurse at His mother’s breast; that the Bread might hunger, the Fountain thirst, the Light sleep, the Way be tired on its journey; that Truth might be accused of false witnesses, the Teacher be beaten with whips, the Foundation be suspended on wood; that Strength might grow weak; that the Healer might be wounded; that Life might die.”

Our Rescuer became like us to do what we couldn’t: to live a life of perfect obedience to God.

Our Rescuer needed to represent humanity as a perfect substitute to rescue us from our sinful selves.

Our Rescuer was like us in every way, yet without sin (Hebrews 4:15). He felt what we feel, was tempted like we are, died like we will die, and yet overcame the powers of the world, the flesh, and the devil by coming back to life and ascending to the right hand of the Father, to rule and reign over all of creation.

Now that we’ve been rescued, we get to join God’s rescue mission in the world! How do we do it? Like Jesus did. We trade our comfort and status for a cross. We go to the toughest places in the world to love the most unlovable people. We join the One who became like us to rescue others so that they can be with him forever.

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FAMILY GUIDE

Suggested Reading

Preschool – He’s Here! (JSB)

Elementary – Philippians 2:5-8

Last week, we talked about how Jesus is God, so he is worthy of our love and trust. But as this story just reminded us, Jesus also became human.

We celebrate Christmas because Jesus came down to the earth as a baby. He lived just like us— he grew up, he spent time with his family, and he felt hungry and tired and even sad sometimes. Jesus knows what it’s like to be us. But unlike us, Jesus lived perfectly and never sinned.

This Christmas, as we read and sing about Jesus, we should thank him for living a perfect life and worship him because he is God!

*“Jesus is God,
so he is worthy
of our love
and trust.”*

A LITURGY FOR HARDSHIP OF
Holidays & Special Days

There are days I am okay, O Lord, and other days I wake and cannot bear to face what awaits; for there are certain days that were once a source of warmth and celebration, of fellowship and life:

birthdays,
holidays,
milestones,
anniversaries.

Those calendar squares—once colored by the light of bright expectation—now hold an inverse ache of their former delight.

Even as I am learning again to take the forward movement of daily life in stride, sometimes these special days arrive and jar me from my new-found rhythm. Past and present overlap; heart and memory feel displaced in time.

As a shipwrecked sailor nearing land, swept again to sea by receding tides, I'm suddenly pulled back to that first sadness.

Sometimes I feel too wearied, weighed down, and weak to navigate another day so marked by loss, O God, so inside-out, so incomplete, so filled with the inescapable presence of an inescapable absence. O Christ, save me from the pain of holidays and special days!

Save me from this pain—or meet me in it, and save me through it.

Either spare me this harsh echo of heartache, O Lord, or shepherd me now through the very living of it; through the resurgent tears, the returning memories, and the reawakened weight of a day that once dawned so pregnant with joy.

Hold me close, O Christ, and show me your face even in this place of lingering loss; even in this season that has become a receptacle of past sorrows.

Amidst my weeping, let sweeter memories resurface, buoyed by deeper joys no sorrow can suppress. Let me draw upon this day's former delights, so that old happiness and heartbreak are laced and intertwined with new hope, and fellowship, and beauty.

Lead me, O Lord, through this layered confusion of celebration and lament, of things present, and things past. Let me make of this day a new thing.

Though holidays might be hard days, O God, by the movement of your mercies may they also become holy days, teaching me again and again to entrust to you my many griefs, as often as these unavoidable days uncover and reveal them.

For if I must endure their repetition—and I know that I must—then let the hurts tendered by this day's arrival become as the annual planting of seeds of sorrow that—tended by your Spirit and watered by my tears—would bloom into harvests of eternal hope.

Indeed let me learn, year-by-year, O Lord, how this long pain might be transformed into the groanings of a faith actively yearning toward a glorious and certain resurrection.

And today let me learn again how your grace will be always sufficient to my need; your comfort sufficient to my sorrow; your presence sufficient to my loss.

The final lines might be memorized and prayed throughout this day, as often as sorrow is encountered and comfort is needed.

Now lead me, carry me, and walk beside me through this day, O Christ, shepherd of all my sorrows.

In unexpected places, let me find joy.
Amen.

Jesus Among Us

¹⁴And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth.

John 1:14

DEVOTIONAL

Week 3

Week 3 – Jesus Among Us

As you have read the Bible, perhaps you've noticed that the Gospel of John is different from the other gospel accounts. The books of Matthew, Mark, and Luke (often called the Synoptic Gospels due to their similarity to one another) follow a similar sequence and point of view. The Gospel of John does not. Scholars reckon that approximately 90% of the Book of John is unique, not found in the other gospels. Why is this?

To start, John begins his gospel in a manner quite distinct from the others. Whereas Matthew begins with a genealogy, and Mark and Luke an account of John the Baptist's ministry, John mirrors the language of Genesis, opening with the familiar words: "In the beginning..." This language is intentional. John leaves us no secret as to his purpose in writing. He states this plainly in John 20:31: "...but these are written *so that you may believe* that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name." [Emphasis added]

John's aim was not merely to provide his audience with an "orderly account" of Christ's life as Luke did (Luke 1:3). Nor was it to convince his audience that Jesus was the promised King of Israel (as in Matthew). John had a distinctly evangelistic focus in writing his account of the life of Christ. He intended to persuade his readers that Jesus Christ was the very Son of God, the Messiah through whom God would bless all nations (Genesis 12:3). Jesus Christ, the second person of our Triune Godhead, came to earth to put on flesh and dwell among us, his creation (John 1:14).

The eternally begotten Son of God entered into history by "being made in the likeness of men" (Philippians 2:7), dwelling among the very people that he came to save. In Jesus Christ, we see the fulfillment of what God foretold in Genesis 3:15: "I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and her offspring; he shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise his heel."

By coming to earth, dwelling among us, fulfilling the righteous requirement of the Law, dying for the sins of those whom he would save, and defeating death through his resurrection, Jesus fulfilled God's eternal purpose. Because Jesus did all this, we can reflect on God's unique glory revealed in him. We can behold his character: his kindness, patience, power, gentleness, humility, holiness, service, and purpose.

In Jesus, we have God *incarnate*: God in the flesh. And by believing in him, we may have life in his name. What wonderful, magnificent news we have in Jesus Christ, the God who dwelt among us.

“The eternally begotten Son of God entered into history by ‘being made in the likeness of men’ dwelling among the very people that he came to save.”

FAMILY GUIDE

Suggested Reading

Preschool – The Light of the Whole World (JSB)

Elementary – Luke 2:8-20

The very first people to hear about Jesus's birth were the shepherds. God could have told all of the really important people first. He could have told all of the really smart people first. Instead, God chose stinky, unimportant shepherds to meet Jesus before anyone else!

Over and over, Jesus chose to be around people that no one else liked. He didn't come to hang out with perfect people (because there aren't any!), but to be among sinners. In fact, you've probably heard this in Northway Kids: Jesus came to save sinners! Jesus is able to make sick hearts into healthy hearts because he is God!

Because we are all born with sick hearts, this is good news. Jesus came to be among us and save his people from their sins.



Jesus For Us

⁹But we see him who for a little while was made lower than the angels, namely Jesus, crowned with glory and honor because of the suffering of death, so that by the grace of God he might taste death for everyone.

¹⁰For it was fitting that he, for whom and by whom all things exist, in bringing many sons to glory, should make the founder of their salvation perfect through suffering. ¹¹For he who sanctifies and those who are sanctified all have one source. That is why he is not ashamed to call them brothers, ¹²saying,

“I will tell of your name to my brothers;
in the midst of the congregation I will sing
your praise.”

¹³And again,

“I will put my trust in him.”

And again,

“Behold, I and the children God has given me.”

¹⁴Since therefore the children share in flesh and blood, he himself likewise partook of the same things, that through death he might destroy the one who has the power of death, that is, the devil, ¹⁵and deliver all those who through fear of death were subject to lifelong slavery. ¹⁶For surely it is not angels that he helps, but he helps the offspring of Abraham. ¹⁷Therefore he had to be made like his brothers in every respect, so that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest in the service of God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people. ¹⁸For because he himself has suffered when tempted, he is able to help those who are being tempted.

Hebrews 2:9-18

DEVOTIONAL

Week 4

Week 4 – Jesus For Us

Life can be scary and hard, filled with dark clouds of doubt, sorrow, and uncertainty. We are sometimes tempted to echo the complaint of the patriarch Jacob in Genesis 42:36: “All these things are against me.”

But no matter how badly we may be beaten down by all that’s broken in the world, there’s a truth that is as unshakable as it is astounding. Jesus is *for* us. Not only is he for us in that he’s cheering us on in the good works he created us to do, he has also done what none of us can do for ourselves or for anyone else. He stepped off of his throne in heaven and humbled himself to become like us in order that he might suffer for us, die for us, rise for us, and one day return for us.

Jesus is the One for whom and by whom all things exist. With his Father and the Holy Spirit, he spoke all things into being, imprinted mankind with his image, and breathed into our nostrils the breath of life. Then, in the fullness of time, he physically

entered the brokenness we created, modeled the life we were meant to live, and promised to breathe new life into us through his indwelling Spirit. And then? He tasted death for us all. He suffered that we might be adopted as sons and daughters. He gave up glory to bring us to glory. And through his death in our place, he destroyed the devil’s power to enslave us. We no longer have anything to fear. Not even death.

Our God became like us in every respect, endured what we endure, ensured our eternal pardon, and now he lives to intercede for us. He knows life is scary and hard, and he’s a merciful and faithful High Priest, available to help us in any temptation or trial.

Jacob believed everything was against him. But he was about to discover that Joseph—the beloved son he thought had been killed by wild beasts years ago—was actually ruling over Egypt and would be the means of salvation from severe famine for Jacob’s

whole family. Everything was not against him. On the contrary, everything was about to exceed his wildest hopes.

Everything is not against us, either. The Beloved Son who left his throne to be born to a poor virgin in a filthy stable wasn't destroyed by those who plotted against him. On the contrary, he accomplished his mission, conquered death and hell, and is now crowned with glory and honor. The founder of our salvation calls us family and has prepared a place for us where there's no more pain, suffering, or tears.

Joseph's brothers intended evil against him. But everything he suffered at their hands was intended by God for the good of many, including his brothers and their children. Jesus was despised and rejected by men. But everything Jesus suffered for the wrongs of his image bearers was God's plan for the salvation of many, including us and our children.

Jesus became broken bread and poured out wine for us. By the grace of God, he tasted our death. By the

grace of God, we feast on his life. Hope beyond our wildest hopes was born in Bethlehem, eternity's King wrapped in swaddling clothes and lying in a feed trough. The sky may darken with clouds of doubt, sorrow, and uncertainty, but the Morning Star ever rises in the hearts of God's children. Jesus is for us. Let us keep the feast with joy.

*“The sky may darken
with clouds of
doubt, sorrow, and
uncertainty, but the
Morning Star ever
rises in the hearts of
God’s children.”*

FAMILY GUIDE

Suggested Reading

Preschool – The King of All Kings (JSB)

Elementary – Matthew 2:1-12

King Herod was very worried about Jesus's birth. He wanted all of the power and attention for himself, and he did not want to share it with anyone else. King Herod was like most kings, and, if we're honest, like most of us. Because he had a sick heart, he was selfish and completely focused on what he wanted.

But Jesus is a way better King. Instead of living for Himself, Jesus lived to serve others. And then, Jesus died and rose again to rescue his people from sin!

The life and death of Jesus is for those who love and trust Jesus. His people get to enjoy and obey him for the rest of their lives.

Parents: This might be a good time to check-in with your children one-on-one. Maybe take them on a walk or ask follow-up questions after your family devotional. Christmas is a great natural milestone for having conversations about Jesus and what His life and death means for us.

Jesus With Us

“Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear
a son, and they shall call his name Immanuel”
(which means, God with us).

Matthew 1:23

DEVOTIONAL

Week 5

Week 5 – Jesus With Us

Jesus, the long promised Emmanuel, God with us. He was the Word made flesh who set his feet to the earth and dwelled among us. Some would not see him for who he was, while others would breathe out a sigh of worship, as hundreds of years of prophecies materialized before their eyes in the form of a precious baby.

Can you imagine peering over the straw into the manger and catching your first glimpse of God in the flesh? This is the one we have waited for. As he left the womb, his cries pierced through 400 years of silence. *He's finally with us, the one who would save us.*

God first spoke the promise of Emmanuel to King Ahaz in Isaiah 7. It was a turbulent and fearful time for Ahaz's kingdom as Assyria forced their way into the land. God gave Ahaz a choice to either trust in him or suffer defeat. Ahaz would not believe God nor would he take God's offer to give Ahaz a basis for belief. In verse 14, God offers the promise of a child.

One that would be entirely different from any other one born to the earth. He would choose righteousness and be without fault. God told King Ahaz, though destruction was coming to His land, God was still with His people and His plan would stand. God's plan was to be present once again with the people of Israel through the future king, Jesus.

We see the echoes of Isaiah 7 in Matthew 1:23, as we see the fulfillment of these prophecies in the birth of Jesus Christ. The long-promised Emmanuel had finally arrived, sent by God to save His people and usher in a new kingdom. He became a man to save the world not from the outside, but from the inside. He entered into our humanity to live among us, to show us the way to the Father, and to demonstrate that way himself through his death and resurrection on a cross. He not only became the Mediator between us and God, but our Redeemer, Savior, and friend. Emmanuel, God *with us*, came to rescue, redeem, and restore our relationship with Him.

Because of His death and resurrection, we can now truly receive the gift of Christ, the gift of “God with us”. Jesus brings light and life where there was once darkness and death within us. We never have to be alone, we never have to strive, we never have to earn. We can rest in his presence knowing he is united to us, and we in him, for the rest of eternity.

“O come, O come, Emmanuel.”

Christ has come, but as we wait for his final return, let our hearts be filled with these beautiful words. His presence is here, but he will come again to fully establish his kingdom here on earth and he will wipe away every tear and death shall be no more. There will be no more mourning, crying, or pain because the former world we know will have passed away (Revelation 21:4).

Until then, we labor towards the kingdom with hope. May the light of Christ within us display to others this same hope this Advent season—Jesus with us.

“His presence is here, but he will come again to fully establish his kingdom here on earth and he will wipe away every tear and death shall be no more.”

FAMILY GUIDE

*Use this QR code
to find some fun
Christmas coloring
pages for your kids!*



O come, O come, Emmanuel.

