



DEVOTIONAL GUIDE

R RIVERSIDE
CHURCH



The devotional is available electronically on our website:
riversidecommunity.org

Additionally, you can receive the devotional daily
via email by subscribing at:
<http://riverside.church/devo>



This cover has been designed using resources from [Freepik.com](https://www.freepik.com)

Friends,

This year we are entering an Advent Season that will (most likely) look and feel very different from previous ones. Our celebrations around this time of year often involve those friends and family that are closest to us, and for many, that will not happen. Advent, in its simplest definition means the coming of something new. In early church history, Advent was not associated with Christmas, but with new life found in Christ. Scholars believe that during the 4th and 5th centuries, Advent, a time of fasting and praying, came before new believers' baptism which occurred on Epiphany (a day to mark the coming of Christ as witnessed by the Wise Men). By the Middle Ages, it got linked to Christ's first coming and is celebrated the four Sundays preceding Christmas.

We don't want to downplay the grief this isolating season will cause for many. This is surely a challenging, hard, and painful time we are walking through. Our prayer as leadership here at Riverside is that you would have relationships alongside you that will sustain you and encourage you. Whether it is a Home Group, Winter Cohort, or another chosen cohort that you spend time with, we all need people in our lives.

Thankfully, we have a Savior who has walked through many dark hours and can empathize with all of our painful times. He is calling us, I believe, to focus our gaze steadfastly on Him through Advent. Dietrich Bonhoeffer says, "The celebration of Advent is possible only to those who are troubled in soul, who know themselves to be poor and imperfect, and who look forward to something greater to come." This certainly describes this moment in history, and I hope our focus.

We've been challenged through the sermons in Revelation to examine where our allegiance lies. This devotional will also ask that question as we walk through the Old Testament for glimpses of the Grand Story that is being told of our need for a Messiah, God's promise of that Messiah, and people's stubborn refusal to align themselves to the One True God. I hope you walk away from this Advent season with a gaze fully focused on Christ. I hope you recommit your allegiance to the God who created everything and deserves our worship. And I hope that you are indeed looking forward to something greater to come.

Keith

Pastor/elder



WEEK 1

SUNDAY (12/6/20) SERMON NOTES

MONDAY (12/7/20)

Hi, my name is Andrew and I've been a pastor at Riverside since we moved here from Michigan in early October. Marcie and I have been married for 17 years and have five kids: Addison (14), Hosea (11), Joel (9), Gabe (6), and Eloise (3).

The passages you are going to read today are **Genesis 1:26-31** and **2:15-25**. These passages describe the creation of humanity; the crowning jewel of God's creation. In Genesis 1, God emphasizes that we are created in the image and likeness of God, to watch over and care for the great gift of this world God has made. In chapter 2, the human (Hebrew ha-Adam) is given freedom to eat from the garden and is given a companion Eve so that he will not be alone. So from nearly the first breaths of humanity, God decides that people should be connected in healthy and close relationships with Him and with one another. This is the original picture of God's shalom, a Hebrew word that describes wholeness in relationships and the flourishing of God's Kingdom in concrete expressions.

This narrative connects to the birth of Christ because it is the very foundation of the incarnation. Jesus is the Word made flesh, the same embodied humanity of Adam and Eve. And the actively flourishing shalom of Eden is precisely what Christ comes to earth to restore; in fact, a new and greater shalom is made possible in Christ. This new shalom will be the picture of justice and reconciliation and all things made new, and what we see in Eden is a foretaste of the glory that will come on the other side of our history.

- ② What does it mean to your faith and theology that Christ comes in the same flesh as you and I?
- ② How is God inviting you to lean into His shalom? Is there something specific you can do to bring about flourishing today?



TUESDAY (12/8/20)

Hi, my name is Greg and I've been an Elder at Riverside for the last 2 years. Megan and I have been married for 22 years and have seven kids, one daughter-in-law and one granddaughter : Nick and wife Morgan, Charlie, Ben, Lincoln, Crisiya, Tariya, Eddie and granddaughter Genevieve.

The passage you are going to read today is **Genesis 3**. In this chapter our species made a choice that would affect humanity severely. Eve was by herself and she was deceived by the serpent. She took the conversation and the fruit from the forbidden tree back to Adam and they ate it. Their eyes were opened and they suddenly felt shame at their nakedness. Shame causes fear and fear makes us want to hide. So when they heard the Lord God walking in the garden they hid. God knew where they were but he asked where are you. Adam blamed Eve and Eve blamed the serpent. Because of their transgressions God cursed them. The serpent will be cursed more than all other animals and made to crawl on their belly. For Eve, she will endure pain during pregnancy and child birth. For Adam the ground will be cursed and grow thorns and thistles and he will work the ground until he returns to it. God made clothes from animal skins for Adam and Eve and banished them from the garden. God placed cherubims at the garden and a flaming sword to guard the tree of life.

This narrative tells a story of paradise lost, the result of the first willful human sin. The consequences were immediate shame and lifelong separation from their home with God. It is only because of the birth of Christ that we don't have to live apart from God. We can live with him now and forever. Because of Jesus we don't have to live as a paradise lost but as a paradise to come. It is only because of Jesus that we can be forgiven for our transgressions.

KNOW (What does the text say about God?)

BE (What does the text say about us?)

DO (What is the text calling me/us to do?)

WEDNESDAY (12/9/20)

Hi, my name is Dale. My wife Cathy and I have been on the Elder Team at Riverside for the past two years. We have attended Riverside since its inception 11 years ago.

The passages you are going to read today are **Genesis 12:1-5** and **Genesis 15:1-6**. These passages describe God's call to Abram and the covenant he establishes with him. In Genesis 12:1-5 God calls Abram and commands him to leave his country and his people to go to a land that God will reveal to him. God promises to bless Abram and to make him a great nation and that through him all the people on earth will be blessed. Abram chooses to obey God even though he has no idea where God will lead him. He realizes that the blessings he will receive in obedience will be greater than the things he will leave behind. He takes his wife Sarai, his nephew Lot, and the people he has acquired in Harran and heads for the land of Canaan. In Genesis 15:1-6 God appears to Abram in a vision and tells him to not be afraid, that he is his shield and his great reward. Abram asks God how His promise will be fulfilled since He has given him no children, and a servant of his household will be his heir. God reassures Abram saying "This man will not be your heir, but a son who is your own flesh and blood will be your heir". God tells him to look up at the sky and count the stars, that his offspring will be just as numerous.

These passages demonstrate God's faithfulness. Even in times of doubt, God will reassure us of His promises and will fulfill them as we remain obedient to Him.

Now, do the Know, Be, Do method of study through the chapter.

KNOW (What does the text say about God?)

BE (What does the text say about us?)

DO (What is the text calling me/us to do?)



THURSDAY (12/10/20)

Hi, my name is Wade and I have been on the elder team for two years. I came to Riverside shortly after it began, when it was meeting at the Keller Park Missionary Church. I have been a home group leader/co-leader for about six years. I was married to a wonderful woman, Pat, who went home four years ago. We have three adult children and four grandchildren.

The passage you are reading today is **Genesis 37**. In this chapter we learn about an event that would change Joseph's life forever, as well as impact future world events. Joseph is seventeen years old and working with his brothers tending the family flocks. We learn that his father, Israel, loved Joseph more than all his other sons. As a sign of his love he made Joseph a multicolored tunic, a loose-fitting outer garment. The obvious favoritism toward Joseph created such hard feelings with his brothers they actually hated him. Joseph had a series of dreams that revealed his brothers and parents bowing down before him. When he shared these dreams with his family, the brothers were so jealous and angry they decided to kill Joseph. His brother Reuben intervened and stopped the killing. The brothers removed his tunic and threw Joseph down an empty pit. While trying to decide what to do, a group of Midianite traders passed by. The brothers sold Joseph into slavery, then told their father he had been killed by a wild beast. When the traders arrived in Egypt Joseph was sold to Potiphar, the captain of the bodyguard of Pharaoh.

How can such a sad, evil story be considered during this time of Advent? It is because the life of Joseph in many ways foreshadows the life of Jesus. We have read Israel loved Joseph more than his other sons. God declares that Jesus is his beloved son in whom he is well pleased (Mt. 3:17). Joseph was sold for twenty pieces of silver, Jesus for thirty pieces of silver (Mt. 26:15). Joseph became a servant in Egypt, Jesus took on the form of a servant (Phil 2:7). Joseph was stripped of his tunic; Jesus was stripped by the Roman guard (Mt. 27:28). Joseph's brothers rejected him and condemned him to death, Jesus was rejected by his family (the Jews) and condemned to death (Luke 19:14, 23:21). In both cases, the salvation of many people was the ultimate result of

their rejection. Many other interesting comparisons can be found here:
<https://jewsforjesus.org/publications/newsletter/newsletter-sep-1985/a-comparison-between-joseph-and-jesus>



- ⌚ As you prepare your heart for the birth of Jesus, reflect on the events of this year and the impact they have had on your life.

- ❓ How can the life of Joseph, and the earthly life of Jesus, help you cope with the effect of these events?

There is an old advertising jingle: *Within this vale of toil and sin, your head grows bald but not your chin. Burma-shave.*

It is cute and catchy. As we struggle with the problems of this world, remember what Jesus said in John 16:33. “I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world.”

FRIDAY (12/11/20)

Hello! Today's reading and reflection comes from me, Benji. My wife Ila and were a part of the team that planted Riverside and it has been quite the journey! And speaking of a journey, lets continue with the life of Joseph today. Our reading is **Genesis 45**, one of the most dramatic passages in the book of Genesis.

Joseph reveals his true identity to his brothers and will begin the process of reconciling his relationship with them. While Joseph's brothers were undoubtedly afraid that Joseph would want revenge, Joseph makes it clear that it was God who had arranged for Joseph to be sent to Egypt. Wow. And not only that, Joseph was sent in order to rescue his family during the famine. What incredible insight and trust in God.

God was orchestrating the events the entire time. God was at work through all of the circumstances and human decisions to ultimately bring about His plan. God was with Joseph and his family the whole time. This rescue by God in the course of this family reminds me of God's plan to rescue all of humanity through the birth of Jesus. Emmanuel. God is with us. God's plan was and has been in full motion the entire time, through all of history and even now.

The certainty of God's will to turn harm into good is the basis for forgiveness and reconciliation with those who do wrong, cause hurt, or bring harm.

② In your life, with whom do you need to forgive or seek reconciliation?

② As Joseph explained, God was at work the entire time. The past year has been a year of struggle for many. Where have you seen God working good in your life this past year?

SATURDAY (12/12/20)

Hi, my name is Susan and I've been on the Elder Team for about five years. I came to Riverside when City Chapel (a small church downtown) became blended into the fabric of Riverside. I serve at Camp Ray Bird, live with my husband Shawn (and usually another housemate! - though right now it's just the two of us :).

The passage you are going to read today is **Exodus 3** where Moses meets the Most High God in the form of a burning bush. He gets commissioned to lead God's people, the Israelites, out of Egypt where they have been slaves for hundreds of years. When they first went to Egypt, they were welcomed by Pharaoh and given a special place to live. Joseph, all his brothers and their dad, Jacob brought everything they owned to live there.

But now, many years had passed and there were thousands of Israelites and that made the Egyptians anxious, so they made them become slaves. They were cruel to them.

The Israelites had been told from generation to generation about the God of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and Joseph, and how He would care for them. So they cried out over and over for help.

And God answers by sending Moses!


Although this can seem like a random story, it really is part of a large story that ends in the birth of Jesus. God was always pursuing the people that He had created in His image. He is pursuing them again through Moses, and asking them to follow Him to a life fulfilled in every way. If we read all of their story, we would see that they rejected God over and over and over again. But God was determined to provide access into His family to those who would have faith and believe in Him.


(continued on the next page)




Finally, He sends Jesus to pursue them and offer them freedom from slavery to sin. Just like Moses led the Israelites out of their slavery, Jesus is born to offer us freedom and point us to belonging in His Kingdom.

Now, do the Know, Be, Do method of study through the chapter.

 **KNOW** - What does the text say about God?


 **BE** - What does the text say about us?


 **DO** - What is the text calling me to do?

 Write out the whole verse that you want to stick with you throughout the day today:

SUNDAY (12/13/20)

This Sunday is the third Sunday in Advent, we will light the pink candle and reflect on the word Joy.

 As you sit and enjoy time with your Heavenly Father this morning, what is bringing you the most joy today?

 As you anticipate the Lord's working in yourself and those around you, what are you joyfully looking forward to?



WEEK 2

SUNDAY (12/13/20) - SERMON NOTES

MONDAY (12/14/20)

Hi, my name is Shawn and I have been an elder at Riverside for a few years since City Chapel and Riverside merged. I am a test engineer at Clark Testing, but my real claim to fame is I am the husband of Susan who does the announcements.

The passage you are going to read today is **Exodus 11–12:42** which describes the final plague in Egypt and the Passover. At this time the Jewish people were slaves in Egypt, and God had a plan to deliver them. Pharaoh had hardened his heart to the previous plagues, so one final plague was brought. This might not seem to connect with the Advent season, but I love the final verse in our reading. “Because the Lord kept vigil that night to bring them out of Egypt, on this night all the Israelites are to keep vigil to honor the Lord for the generations to come.”

Sit for a minute and imagine the situation in Egypt at that time. Slaves in a foreign land. A special meal together. An odd command to spread blood over the doorway. A night (with no electricity) with death, wailing, and fear.

Similar to the Jews at this time, we are in a land not our own. Philippians 3:20 says, “But our citizenship is in heaven. And we eagerly await a Savior from there, the Lord Jesus Christ.” It is easy to get complacent here and think things are pretty good, we are not in quite the same situation as the Jews in Egypt. But are we just fooling ourselves, lukewarm like the Laodicean church?

Two questions for the day:

- ① How have you settled for life in Egypt?

- ② How can you eagerly await Jesus today?

And one final thought. Exodus says the Lord kept vigil that night. What a great picture of the Lord caring and watching over us as we wait.



TUESDAY (12/15/20)

Read Exodus 16


Hi, my name is Megan Colvin. I've been on the elder team for 2 years and also serve on the women's ministry team with a wonderful group of ladies. I have been married to Greg for 22 years and we have been attending Riverside for almost 10 years with our children Charlie (17), Ben (16), Lincoln (9), Crisiya (9), Tariya (9) and Eddie (8). As an added bonus our oldest son Nick, daughter-in-law Morgan and granddaughter Genevieve (2 months) live right across the street!


The passage you are going to read today is Exodus chapter 16. In this chapter the Israelites, led by Moses and Aaron, left Elim and entered the Desert of Sin. As things began to get more difficult and uncomfortable the Israelites started to complain and grumble. The Lord told Moses He would provide for them by sending manna. He provided detailed instruction on the collection of the manna. The Lord was teaching and testing the Israelites to see if they would obey His instructions. He also sent quail for them for their evening meal. When morning came the Israelites collected just as much as they needed. Moses told them not to save any of it, some did and it was rotten. As they were instructed on the sixth day they collected twice as much so they could rest on the seventh day, the Sabbath. Some still went to gather on the seventh day and there was nothing to be found. The Lord instructed them to save two quarts in a jar that would then be placed at the Ark of the Covenant so their descendants could see the food He had provided for them during the forty years that it took them to get to the land of Canaan.

There is so much symbolism in this passage, but I am going to focus on just a few things here. God wanted to provide for his people. As the Israelites complained and grumbled, He sent manna from heaven down to earth so they had sustenance to strengthen their bodies, and so they would survive their journey.


In the same way, God sent Jesus, perfect Redeemer, from heaven down to earth to satisfy us spiritually. Jesus, who came as a baby, was then placed in a manger (a feeding trough!) God provided Jesus, the Bread of Life, to redeem us from our sin. When God instructed them to put the manna in The Ark of the Covenant it was to show generations of people of His provision, that He always had these things in place because of His Sovereignty.

Now, do the Know, Be, Do method of study through the chapter.

 **KNOW** - What does the text say about God?

 **BE** - What does the text say about us?

 **DO** - What is the text calling me to do?

 Pray that the Lord will bring to mind all the things He has provided for you and thank Him for them.

WEDNESDAY (12/16/20)

Hello, my name is Cathy. My husband Dale and I have been part of the Elder team for the past two years, and part of Riverside since it began 11 years ago. We both grew up in this area, and have three sons, and seven grandchildren. The passages you are going to read today are: **Exodus 32** and **Exodus 34:1-14**.

Israel has been rescued from slavery, led through the parting of the Red Sea, and were sustained through the desert. The people have entered into a covenant relationship with God, and have received the law and the Ten Commandments. While Moses remained on Mt. Sinai with the Lord, the people became restless and asked Aaron to make them gods to go before them. They longed for the familiar patterns of their former life. Aaron went along with their request. God's anger burned against the people. He tells Moses of their disobedience, and His plan to destroy them. Moses intercedes for the people, pleading for mercy, and in His mercy God spared them. Even though God in His mercy spared the people, harsh consequences remained.

The next part of the passage describes the new stone tablets made after Moses broke the original ones after seeing the evil that the people had done. The Lord proclaims his compassion and forgiveness of their wickedness to Moses, making a covenant with the people to go with them and give them victory, as long as they obey His commands.

These passages demonstrate how often we forget what God has done and who He is, and long to make Him into an image that suits our desires. God displayed his mercy and forgiveness to the people, keeping his covenant with Abraham through many generations, even though they deserved his wrath. In the same way we have been granted pardon from the penalty of sin and death, through Jesus Christ.

- ② What false god's have moved into my/your life, preventing the true God from living in and through me/us?

- ② What action do we need to take to restore or preserve God's reign and rule in our lives?

THURSDAY (12/17/20)

Hi, my name is Greg and I've been an Elder at Riverside for the last 2 years. Megan and I have been married for 22 years and have seven kids, one daughter-in-law and one granddaughter : Nick and wife Morgan, Charlie, Ben, Lincoln, Crisiya, Tariya, Eddie and granddaughter Genevieve.

The passages you are going to read today are **Numbers 21:4-9**, **Kings 18:4**, and **John 3:14**. In Numbers 21 Moses has already led his people out of Egypt. They are in the desert and grumbling about Moses and God. They are talking about how Moses led them on a long journey in the desert and God's provisions. Poisonous snakes came among the people and several died. Then the people came to Moses and cried out their wrongdoings against God and him. They asked Moses to pray. He made a replica of the poisonous snake out of bronze and placed it on a pole. Anyone who was bitten could look at the bronze snake and be healed. Then in Kings the Bronze snake was destroyed because people were offering sacrifices to it because of what had happened in the desert. In John Jesus is comparing the lifting of the bronze snake to the Son of Man being lifted up.

Moses had led his people out of Egypt and into the desert. God had provided all their provisions for them but they still weren't happy. God disciplined the people until they cried out for God's help. The bronze snake was something God had made for that time. It is easy for God's people to make idols out of good things that have outlived their usefulness. God used the Uplifting of the bronze serpent to picture his own death on the cross. Because of Christ's death upon the cross we have him to look to for all healing. Jesus conquered death and all we have to do is believe in Him and we will have eternal life.

Now, do the Know, Be, Do method of study through the chapter.

KNOW (What does the text say about God?)

BE (What does the text say about us?)

DO (What is the text calling me/us to do?)



FRIDAY (12/18/20)

Hi, my name is Andrew, and I am the “In” Pastor at Riverside. It is truly a gift to be called to oversee home groups, formation ministries, and connections. At 6’9”, I am one of the tallest people around, and though it once took up most of my life, I gave up my brief basketball career at age 16.

The passages you will read today are **Exodus 25:1-9** and **Exodus 40:34-38**. The Lord told Moses to “...have them make a sanctuary for me, and I will dwell among them” (Exodus 25:8). God wants to assure the Israelites that He is with them throughout their wilderness wanderings during their great forty-year exodus from the promised land. It is one thing for God to tell them He is with them, but it is another to show them. By building the Tabernacle, a beautiful yet portable central point for the presence of God, the people had a place to turn their eyes and know—the Lord is with us.

Centuries later, God’s people would need to be assured again that God is with us. But this time, God does not show up as a glorious presence on a throne behind tabernacle curtains, but as a baby in a cattle-feeding trough in a stable. This is the glory of the Lord’s presence, embodied in the awesome fragility of a newborn child. That God could somehow package the glory described in Exodus 40 in the frame of a baby is one of the primary reasons the hope of Advent is at the center of our life in God.

- ② What similarities do you see between the presence of God in the tabernacle and in the coming of Jesus? What differences do you see?

- ② Israel needed to see the tabernacle to be reminded of God’s presence among them. Christ was born in large part to assure us that God is with us. What is one way God makes His presence known in your life today?

SATURDAY (12/19/20)

Hey Riverside Family! This is Ila, and I'm glad to spend this moment in the Advent season with you. If you don't know me, I'm Benji's other half. Folks can usually find me singing with the worship team, teaching the 3rd-5th graders, or keeping up with our four adventurous girls!

Today, we are going to read a portion of Numbers together. In this section, the Hebrew people have been freed from slavery in Egypt for at least two years now. The journey so far has been filled with God performing remarkable signs, displaying his power over all creation. The people arrive just outside the promised land and send out a scout from each of the twelve tribes to gather information on this land they are to inherit.

Let's read to find out what these twelve men report back to their community:
Numbers 13:26-14:25.

The promised land was rich and beautiful...but there were giants. Giants are scary! Ten of the spies work the whole community into a frenzy of disbelief and dread. No matter how many acts of power they've witnessed, they refuse to trust God. Because of fear and unbelief, the whole community is sent back to wander the desert.


Only Joshua and Caleb believed in God's power and goodness to conquer the land. How frustrating it must have been for those two to wait 40 years and suffer through the disobedience of their community. Others saw the giants and believed that God's gift was too dangerous. They finished their days on Earth never receiving the promise.

Caleb and Joshua saw past the giants and believed God's gift was good. Their Father had already purchased it, wrapped it up, and slapped a bow on it. All the people had to do was believe enough to grab it and open it. Following Jesus can also lead us to face scary giants. May our faith be greater!

(continued on the next page)



 List any current giants you are facing:

 Let's lay these giants at the feet of Jesus. Write a prayer of faith, trusting God to fight these battles with you and for you:

SUNDAY (12/20/20)

On this fourth Sunday of Advent, we light the final candle and reflect on Love.

📖 As you sit and relax with the Father this morning, say aloud the ways that the Father has demonstrated His love to you personally.

♡ Think back over this past year, how do you know that you are loved?



WEEK 3

SUNDAY (12/20/20) - SERMON NOTES

MONDAY (12/21/20)

Hi, my name is Tamara and I have been on staff doing kids' ministry for a little over a year now. I moved to South Bend from Vincennes, IN last August through connections at Camp Ray Bird. I began attending Riverside during the summer I first started working at Ray Bird. I live with my roommate, Azia, and our two kittens.

The passage today is **Joshua 1-2**. In Joshua 1, the Lord told Joshua to take his people and cross the Jordan River into the land that was to be given to them. God promised to give them every land that touched their foot and that no one would be able to stand against them. The Lord told them to be strong and courageous and to keep the law Moses gave to them, for He would be with them wherever they went. And so they did.

In Joshua 2, Joshua sent two spies to look over Jericho. The king of Jericho knew of this, so he sent a message to Rahab, telling her to bring out the men who entered her home to spy. But Rahab had hidden the spies and told the king that she didn't know where they went. Rahab asked the spies to spare the lives of her family in return for her hiding them and they promised her so. Rahab let them down by a rope and told them to hide in the hills for three days. The spies told Rahab to tie a scarlet cord in the window so that they would be protected. She did so, and the spies returned to Joshua telling him everything that happened. They said "The Lord has surely given the whole land into our hands.."


God pursued Joshua and the Israelites and promised that He would stand with them and give them every place where they set their feet and that no one would stand against them. In Jericho, they were aided by Rahab, who God used as a model of hospitality, mercy, and faith.


(continued on the next page)




Rahab assured the spies that Jericho was fearful of them because they knew the Lord had promised them the land of Jericho. The spies returned back to camp confident that the Lord was fulfilling His promise.

Read Joshua 1-2 and do the Know, Be, Do method of study for through the chapter.

 **KNOW** - What does the text say about God?

 **BE** - What does the text say about us?

 **DO** - What is the text calling me to do?

 Write out the whole verse that you want to stick with you throughout the day today:

TUESDAY (12/22/20)

I'm Marcie and I'm new to South Bend and Riverside. We moved here from Michigan in early October when my husband Andrew joined the staff at Riverside. Andrew and I have spent the last few months settling into our neighborhood just a few blocks West of downtown, with our five children.

The passage you are going to read today is: **Joshua 3-4:9**

We often hear about God parting the Red Sea for the Israelites to cross, but it was not the only time God intervened in a water hazard. Today we read about Joshua, following God's commands to lead the Israelites and the ark of the covenant across the Jordan River. The passage says the Jordan was at flood stage, so imagine the roaring waters, overflowing, an inundation of water, and Joshua leading his people to cross. Common knowledge tells us that even drowsy, slow-moving rivers often hide a dangerous current in its depths, and here we see a visibly dangerous obstacle and the story of how God shows up in a big way!

Then in the middle of the trek, Joshua, with God's instruction, tells twelve representatives to pick twelve large stones, that they then use as a testament, a sign, of the time the Jordan's river stopped flowing. A pile of rocks to symbolize a miracle!

Advent is also a time full of signs and testaments of the God's intervention into seemingly impossible obstacles in our lives. We fill our church and houses with symbols that prompt our children and others to ask, "What do these stones mean?" We spend our weeks, reflecting and preparing to celebrate the Light of the World coming into the world to continue His miracle work.

- ② Where have you seen God working in your life recently? What tangible object can you use to remind yourself of that work God is doing?

- ② Do you have ornaments on your Christmas tree that commemorate important events in your life? Take time to share about those events with others. How did God show up in those times? How was God faithful?



WEDNESDAY (12/23/20)

Hi, my name is Shelley and I have been part of Riverside since its beginning. I am the wife of Keith and mother of a slew of teenagers; I cannot keep their ages straight!

Today's passage comes from **Joshua 5:10-6:27**.

At the end of Chapter 5, we see a Commander of the Lord's army come and visit Joshua. I don't know about you, but I have never had this happen to me and I cannot quite imagine what it would feel like. I am guessing I would be similar to Joshua and end up face down in reverence. What a humble stance for Joshua to be in, as in the next chapter he heads into a tough situation.

In Chapter 6, we see the Israelites head to the city of Jericho. God has commanded them that this city will belong to them.

The Lord speaks to his people and gives them very specific instructions, which I have to believe they looked at each other and wondered what they were doing. Walking around the walls? No talking? For how many days?

I don't know if you had ever had a point in your life when you asked God these same questions. Maybe it was "Move to where?" or "Bring up Jesus to that friend?" or even "That much money to give away?"

I am pretty sure if you have followed Jesus for any amount of time, you have had one, or probably more, of these moments. To the world, walking around a wall each day for seven days seemed like a ridiculous way to fight and try to overcome a city. And I am sure that as Mary looked towards the birth of Jesus as an unwed single teenage mother, she questioned at times what God was doing. But you know what? It was God's way. He has spoken clearly to Joshua and the Israelites and desired for them to trust him and be obedient.

Some of you may remember the old Veggie Tales episode about Jericho and the song titled “Keep Walking” (Follow the link to get it stuck in your head all day! 😊 https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QXM2o_Hb9Ls)



I think at some point in our walk, this is all we can hold on to. To keep walking. When things are hard and there seems to be no end in sight, keep walking. When a global pandemic is happening and it seems like the end is never coming, keep walking. Keep listening for the voice of God, keep digging, keep putting one foot in front of the other. Keep leaning into the Word and God’s truth. I am pretty sure we will one day look back and be amazed at the walls that fell because we just kept walking in obedience to God.

- ② What are ways that God is calling you to keep walking?

- ② What are things you can look back on and thank God for walking with you through?

- 🔍 Find someone to encourage today-encourage them to keep walking, keeping their eyes focused on the Lord.

THURSDAY (12/24/20) CHRISTMAS EVE

Hi, my name is Cathy, and I've been part of the Elder team with my husband Dale for the past two years. We have been part of Riverside since it was first planted 11 years ago. During most of that time we have also been part of the Missions team, and have traveled several times to Asha Children's home in India. The passage you are going to read today is **Judges 2**.

Israel has entered the promised land, and their leader Joshua has died. Without strong spiritual leadership in the generations that followed, compromise occurs as they continue to occupy the land. This begins a change in Israel's relationship with God. The angel of the Lord appears to the people and speaks to them of their failure to drive out the inhabitants of the land, along with their idol worship and corrupt practices. God removes His agreement to help them conquer the land, and they are soon oppressed by those they allowed to remain. The people weep and are sorrowful for their disobedience. In God's mercy, He raises up judges to save them from their oppressors. This sets the stage for a repeating cycle of sin, judgment, and repentance that is fleshed out in the rest of Judges.

Although God no longer gave Israel the upper hand with the inhabitants of the land, God's overriding covenant with the people of Israel remained. His promise to make Israel a nation through whom the whole world would be blessed remained. Although the people strayed from God time and again, His promise remained steadfast.

What stands out to me in this passage is that just as God showed mercy to the people of Israel, He has done the same for us. Instead of giving us the judgment that we deserve, He showed His mercy by providing an escape from the penalty of sin and death, through Jesus Christ.

Now the Know, Be, Do method of studying the chapter.

KNOW (What does the text say about God?)

BE (What does the text say about us?)

DO (What is the text calling me/us to do?)

FRIDAY (12/25/20) MERRY CHRISTMAS!

Hi, my name is Dale. My wife Cathy and I are part of the Elder Team and also on the Mission Team. We have had the privilege of traveling to India several times to visit the children at Asha in Delhi and Kolkata whom Riverside sponsor.

The passages you are going to read today are **1 Samuel 3:19-21, 1 Samuel 8:1-9, 1 Samuel 9:15-17, and 1 Samuel 15:1-26.**

These passages tell the story of Israel once again wanting to do things their own way instead of God's way. Samuel, a prophet of God, is approached by the Elders of Israel demanding that they have a king like all of the other nations. This troubles Samuel greatly, so he prays to the Lord. The Lord tells him to listen to their demands but to warn them of what a king will ultimately require of them. Samuel warns them that eventually the king will demand all of their possessions that he desires, and will make them his slaves. Despite hearing this, the Elders refuse to listen. Ultimately the Lord tells Samuel to grant them their demand.

Later God tells Samuel that Saul is the man who should govern his people. Saul becomes king and is commanded to attack the Amalekites for what they have done to Israel. He is told to destroy the whole city and to spare nothing. Saul disobeys God and instead of destroying everything, he destroys only those things that are despised and weak, and keeps the things that are good for himself. When confronted by Samuel, Saul first denies that he disobeyed, and then points the blame to others, leading to rejection by God.

These passages show that even though God our Heavenly King knows what is best, he gives us free will to choose our own path. We will bear the consequences of those choices.

Now the Know, Be, Do method of studying the chapter.

KNOW (What does the text say about God?)

BE (What does the text say about us?)

DO (What is the text calling me/us to do?)



SATURDAY (12/26/20)

Hello, this is Jeff Walker. I was an original member of the Riverside church planting team in 2008. Some life situations took me away from Riverside, but I returned in October 2015 as an active covenant partner. Although I have served the church in a variety of functions, I just recently stepped into the leadership role as Executive Director of The Beacon, this amazing space that God has so richly blessed us with.

The passages you are going to read today are **1 Samuel 16: 1-13, 2 Samuel 5:1-5, 1 Kings 9:1-9, and John 7:42**. These passages give us a snapshot into the life and journey of King David. 1 Samuel 15 ends with The Lord rejecting King Saul and regretting that He had made Saul King.

In the 1 Samuel 16 passage is where The Lord commissions Samuel to go providentially find the new King of Israel. When Samuel arrived in Bethlehem, he looked upon the first seven of Jesse's sons, but The Lord rejected them all. Then there was the least likely of them all, the youngest son David. The scripture says that he was ruddy, had beautiful eyes and was handsome. The Lord commanded Samuel to Arise and anoint him, for this is he who was chosen.

It would be nearly 15 years before David would be anointed at Hebron and begin his reign as King over Israel. David was not a perfect man by any stretch as we know from his encounter with Bathsheba and Uriah the Hittite. However, we see in 1 Kings 9 God appeared to Solomon, David's son and God tells Solomon to "walk before Me as your father David walked, with integrity and uprightness..." There was more instruction but if Solomon were obedient and faithful like his father, the dynasty of David would endure forever, just as the Lord had promised King David. And we see this come to pass as John 7:42 tells us Christ comes from the offspring or seed of David.

Now, do the Know, Be, Do method of study through these passages.

KNOW (What does the text say about God?)

BE (What does the text say about us?)

DO (What is the text calling me/us to do?)

SUNDAY (12/27/20)

As we enjoy our predictable routine this Sunday after Christmas, let's just spend some time in thanksgiving.

According to the church calendar, Christmas is celebrated from December 25th until January 6th. So we can keep enjoying the candles, the lights, and the ways of remembering the coming of the Savior.

All of us will be enjoying a virtual service today, so heat up your beverage and let's get ready to worship together!



WEEK 4

SUNDAY (12/27/20) - SERMON NOTES

MONDAY (12/28/20)

Happy Monday! It's me Susan again. Some other interesting things about me: I get to do the announcements every week, and I get to serve with the teens! Shawn and I have a blended family and love this non traditional part of ourselves. A deeply held value of ours is that families should be more open and inclusive of the single folks around us.

Today we are going to read: **1 Kings 11:9-13** and **1 Kings 12:1-24**.

Jeff shared yesterday that Solomon was commanded to walk before the Lord in the example of his father, David. Today we read that he absolutely did not do that.

I can't wait to meet David in heaven. Scripture gives us such a great picture of his person- complete with huge failings, and huge repentance. One time I searched (using a computer :) for all the times that the sentence "for the sake of my servant David" occurs so that I could read those passages. Solomon, as David's son, saw much of this as he lived alongside David. Yet it seems that he did not learn the repentance portion of David's character. This always makes me sad to read. Then, Solomon's son, Rehoboam, also begins to lead in arrogance rejecting the wisdom of the elders. Jesus, often referred to as "the son of David" finally leads in a godly direction. Pointing His beloved Israel to the Father.

- ② What areas of your character are you allowing and seeking the Lord's refining so that he might say, "for the sake of my servant _____ (your name)?"
- ② Where do you go for wisdom in your life? Is it God's wisdom that you receive back? How intent are you at following Godly wisdom?



TUESDAY (12/29/20)

Well, if you don't know me, my name is Keith and I'm one of the leaders around our church. I was part of the team that started Riverside 11 years ago, and I've personally been so blessed in terms of how Riverside has helped me grow as a follower of Jesus.

There have been so many ways that Riversiders have spoken into me and helped form me to become more like Jesus, and for that I'm thankful!

With that said, today we have two passages. The first passage **1 Kings 16: 29-33** quickly talks about one of the worst kings of Israel. It's a short passage but a really sad one.

Thankfully, two chapters later in **1 Kings 18:16-46** we then read about one of the most courageous stands by one of God's prophets. The bad king is still on the scene but the prophet of God stands firm and calls people to make a decision in terms of where their ultimate allegiance will be.

As you read these two passages, really try to picture both scenes.

Place yourself in the first passage, and imagine how hard it would have been to stay faithful to God in the midst of such wicked leadership. In the second passage, really try and picture yourself as one of the bystanders. Try to immerse yourself into the event.

And ultimately, this season of Christmas calls us to reflect on the King of the universe that is PRESENT and among His people. Just like the all consuming fire came down from heaven in the time of Elijah, Jesus also came down from heaven in a spectacular (yet unexpected) way.

WEDNESDAY (12/30/20)

Hello! Susan here again 😊

A few more things about me to round out the picture: I love seeing people connect with the scriptures and I love listening to the Bible read aloud; I love kayaking and have almost done the whole length of the St Joe River; I deeply desire to see the church be a more loving space for single folks and for those from the LGBTQ community; I love playing sneaky uppy games in the dark out at camp.

Read 2 Kings 22-23:26

Ahhhh! Josiah “follows in the ways of his father, David”!! Yeah! He is a shining light after he becomes king at only 8 years old following the assassination of his father- who was so evil that his own officials killed him and made this child king.

It is incredible to me how he turned the nation around. We read “ in the eighteenth year of King Josiah, this Passover was celebrated to the Lord in Jerusalem.” Josiah was 26 years old and was steadfastly working to lead his people towards the Lord.

I love the picture of the officials choosing an 8 year old to be king because they recognized the evil in his father and hoped for better from him. And then it seems they allowed their lives and people to be aligned to his young leading and much good was done.

I know that we’ve spoken often of allegiance in this devotional, and in the sermons we’ve been hearing through Revelation. It’s so important where we place our allegiance. Recognizing that it is a choice, it is active and premeditated.

- ② How are you choosing today to align yourself to the principles and values of God’s kingdom? Where do you see this evidence in your life?

- ② Josiah celebrates the Passover like it hadn’t been celebrated in years. What can you celebrate today in your relationship with Jesus?

THURSDAY (12/31/20) NEW YEAR'S EVE

Hello, it's Benji today again with a reading and reflection. Today we are going to read **Isaiah 61**.

In this chapter of Isaiah, we are introduced to the way that God will enable his people to live righteous lives, which will in turn point the nations to God. Jesus applied these very words from the opening verses to his own mission as recorded in Luke 4:18-19. In Isaiah 61, the author states that God's people will become like great oaks. This description is in direct contrast to what was previously mentioned in Isaiah 1:27-31: the people as oaks with fading leaves because of their unrighteousness and injustices that were happening in their community (Isaiah 1:21). God reveals how this change in the hearts of men will become a reality – through the work of the Messiah. Jesus will come not only to deliver, but to transform. These words from Isaiah remind me of the third verse of the Christmas carol “O Holy Night” which states,

*Truly He taught us to love one another
His law is love and His gospel is peace
Chains shall he break, for the slave is our brother
And in His name all oppression shall cease
Sweet hymns of joy in grateful chorus raise we
Let all within us Praise His Holy name
Christ is the Lord; O praise His name forever!
His power and glory evermore proclaim
His power and glory evermore proclaim*

- ② Which description of an oak tree do you relate more with right now: an oak with fading leaves or a mighty oak planted for God's glory?

- ② Where specifically does your life need Jesus's Isaiah 61 power right now? (to bind a broken heart, proclaim freedom, release from darkness, proclaim the Lord's favor and justice, comfort during a time of mourning)



FRIDAY (1/1/21) NEW YEAR'S DAY

Hi, my name is Megan Colvin. I've been on the elder team for two years and also serve on the women's ministry team with a wonderful group of ladies. I have been married to Greg for 22 years and we have been attending Riverside for almost 10 years with our children Charlie (17), Ben (16), Lincoln (9), Crisiya (9), Tariya (9) and Eddie (8). As an added bonus our oldest son Nick, daughter-in-law Morgan and granddaughter Genevieve (2 months) live right across the street!


The passage you are going to read today is **Jeremiah 33**. It starts with the Lord giving Jeremiah a message. Jeremiah knows that the city is going to stand in judgment and the Lord reassures Jeremiah of the good things to come. He tells him of the defiled nation that will be restored, that the city will be full of people one day praising the Lord with joy. He continues on that the ruined fields and lands will be full of animals that the day will come that He restores peace and prosperity to Israel and Judah, just as He has promised them. He says in that day and time He will raise up a righteous descendant from King David's line and that descent will do what is just and right for the land. At that time Judah will be saved and Jerusalem will live in safety.

Jeremiah has already been through so much dealing with the people turning their back on God. At this point he had continually called for the people to repent and they are clearly not doing so. The repercussions for that willful disobedience have been and will continue to be massive. Jeremiah has many battles ahead and God knows this. When the Lord shares with Jeremiah the good things ahead, it had to be a boost to Jeremiah's spirit.


The Lord tells Jeremiah that the city and lands will be restored to good health, prosperity and peace, that the fields will be full of animals again and that the people will be praising the Lord and loving one another. And then we have a foreshadowing when The Lord shares with Jeremiah of the greatest blessing yet to come, a Righteous descendant from King David's line, a descendant that will do what is just and right and not just for Judah and Jerusalem but for all the world. That descendant of course, that came to earth as a baby is Jesus Christ.

Read Jeremiah 33 and do the Know, Be, Do method of study for through the chapter.

 **KNOW** - What does the text say about God?

 **BE** - What does the text say about us?

 **DO** - What is the text calling me to do?

 Write out the whole verse that you want to stick with you throughout the day today:

SATURDAY (1/2/21)


Hey family, it's Ila here with you again. Is it okay if we just pass the small talk and get real for a moment? I realize I can't verify your agreement, but thank you for pretending with me. Let's get real! Sometimes, I'm pleased with myself as a "good" person...Other times, I deeply—desperately—know that I need a Savior to rescue me from my wretched self. In today's passage, God sends Malachi the prophet to shine a spotlight on some wretched sins. It's not a happy message. It's quite devastating. Yet, it's necessary.

God's people were back in their own land, worshiping in their own temple. They were no longer exiles, no longer controlled by a foreign power. Life seemed to be good! They were home. They were free. But the people were enslaved to another master and power: sin.

Let's buckle up, humble ourselves, and hear what God says to a people who desperately need the Savior: **Malachi 2:1-3:5**

Yes, God loves us always, and He is a forgiving God! But God is not okay with us dishonoring His name or dishonoring other people. In the very last book of the Old Testament, it is quite clear that laws are not enough to make people good.

We need a Savior.

 To dissect this intense section further, list out the major crimes of God's people.


- Verse 2:8:

- Verse 2:11:

- Verse 2:14:
- Verse 2:17:
- Verse 3:5 :

Confess and ask God to cleanse and free you from any of these sins.

② What is Jesus promised to do to save God's people? (3:3-4)

 Thank Jesus for fulfilling this prophecy and coming into our world as the promised acceptable sacrifice for our sins.

SUNDAY (1/3/21)

Good morning this fine Sunday!

Whether or not you are one for resolutions, spend some time this morning praying about what qualities and characteristics you would like to see the Holy Spirit help you develop this year.

- ② Who do you want to be one year from now? What practices can you put in place to see that become a reality?

If you want help thinking through this, reach out to one of the Pastors, Elders, or Leaders that you've gotten to know through these devotions!



WEEK 5

SUNDAY (1/3/21) - SERMON NOTES

MONDAY (1/4/21)

Hello, this is Jeff Walker and I have been on such an unexpected journey with God since my return in 2015. It has been such a blessing to serve on the worship team here at Riverside Church and now to leave the business world and join the ministry staff I could never have imagined that this is where God was calling me too.

The passages you are going to read today are **Luke 1:1-25, 57-80**. These passages begin in verse 5 by introducing us to a priest named Zechariah and his wife Elizabeth. We learn that they both were righteous and blameless before God. Zechariah was in the temple serving as priest before God when an angel (we believe Gabriel) appeared to him and foretold the birth of John the Baptist. The angel tells Zechariah that his prayers had been heard and that he and his wife Elizabeth would bear a son and that this son shall be named John. Very specific instruction. The angel prophesies that this baby John will be filled with the holy spirit. However, in Zechariah's disbelief that he and Elizabeth could have a baby since they were well advanced in years Zechariah was struck speechless until this baby would be born.

The succeeding passages culminate with the birth of John the Baptist. The Lord had shown great mercy to Elizabeth and the peoples rejoiced with her. Zechariah is filled with the holy spirit and he prophesies. Blessing and praising the Lord for all he has done.

We see in these passages the Holy spirit at work to bring about the plan of God. God had chosen before the foundation of the world that the forerunner John would be conceived through Zechariah and Elizabeth and that amid unbelief God's purpose and plan will come to pass.

- ② How has God spoken to you or what has he promised in His word that just seems so impossible that it will come to pass?
- ② What has God done in your life that you can bless and praise him for? Take a moment right now and do that.



TUESDAY (1/5/21)


Hi, my name is Tamara and I have been on staff doing kids' ministry for a little over a year now. I moved to South Bend from Vincennes, IN last August through connections at Camp Ray Bird. I began attending Riverside during the summer I first started working at Camp Ray Bird. I live with my roommate, Azia, and our two kittens.

The passage you are going to read today is **Matthew 1:17-25**, the story of how Joseph accepts Jesus as his son. Mary was to marry Joseph, but she had found out she was pregnant through the Holy Spirit. Joseph was going to discreetly divorce her, but the Lord sent an Angel to him in his dream. The Angel told Joseph not to fear taking Mary as his wife, for she will give birth to a son, who was from the Holy Spirit. Joseph was to call him Jesus, because he would save his people from their sins. Joseph woke up and did as the Lord commanded him by taking Mary home as his wife. She gave birth to a son and he was given the name Jesus.

Joseph was ready to give up on Mary. He was ready to give up his marriage. He had felt betrayed and probably confused. But the Lord sought him out and spoke truth to him. God had shown Joseph that he was in control of a seemingly helpless situation.

Read **Matthew 1:17-25** and do the Know, Be, Do method of study for through the chapter.

 **KNOW** - What does the text say about God?

 **BE** - What does the text say about us?

 **DO** - What is the text calling me to do?

WEDNESDAY (1/6/21)

I'm Marcie and I'm new to South Bend and Riverside. We moved here from Michigan in early October when my husband Andrew joined the staff at Riverside. Andrew and I have spent the last few months settling into our neighborhood just a few blocks West of downtown, with our five children.

The passage you are going to read today is: **Luke 2:8-20**

A few years ago our family camped just outside the entrance to Rocky Mountain National Park in Colorado. It was a warm, clear July night and sky was spectacular. There were so many stars and planets and such quiet, it was hard to determine where the earth stopped, and the heavens began. Our typically noisy crew stood breathless in awe and wonder. I often think of our mountainside experience when I think of these shepherds on a hillside in the quiet of night. Perhaps, they were also stargazing when they were thrust into a front row seat in the world's most historic Hallelujah chorus. A seemingly routine night at work, becomes a concert of angels and then a treasure hunt for the greatest gift of all time!

What really stood out to me in this passage is the shepherds' willingness to break from their plans (a routine night of work) and seek out this tiny Messiah. I have so many questions! Did they leave their sheep behind? How far was Bethlehem from where they were and did they know the way there? Were they nervous about barging in on first time parents and their family? This passage is not about the logistics, but it tells a story of a group of shepherds that immediately responded when they were presented with an opportunity to seek out their Savior.

- ② You've heard the good news! There is great joy for all the people! How are you responding to the Messiah's birth?

- ② Like the shepherds, how can you be more willing to break from your plans and seek out God's calling and promptings from the Holy Spirit in your life today?



THURSDAY (1/7/21)

Hi, my name is Wade and I have been on the elder team for two years. I came to Riverside shortly after it began, when it was meeting at the Keller Park Missionary Church. I have been a home group leader/co-leader for about six years. I was married to a wonderful woman, Pat, who went home four years ago. We have three adult children and four grandchildren.

The passage you are reading today is **Matthew 2:1-18**.

This is Matthew's account of the Magi's journey to visit the new born King of the Jews. More commonly known as the Three Wise Men, their story goes much deeper than a group of men bringing gifts to a new born baby. There is not much documented history about the Magi. Matthew does not tell us how many men were part of the Magi band that traveled to see the King.

Our customs assume there were three based on the three gifts they brought. We know they came from the East but we do not know their actual home country. We know they saw the star which told them the King of the Jews was born and they came to worship him. We know they first went to Jerusalem seeking direction to the location of the new King. It was here they encountered King Herod and he first learned about the new King. The rest, as is said, is history.

The birth of Jesus was revealed to two different groups of people. The first being the shepherds who were awake at night watching their sheep. Shepherds were part of the lowest social group in their society. They spent all their time with their animals ensuring they were safe and caring for their every need. On the night of Jesus' birth, the angels lit up the sky and announced HIS birth to the shepherds. The second group were the Magi. They saw his star and knew the King had been born. They set out to find this new King so they could worship him.

Unlike the shepherds, we don't know when they arrived in Bethlehem. Given Herod's decree to kill all the male babies under two years of age (Mt. 2:16), it must have been some time after the shepherds had been there. Jesus' birth was announced to the lowest of Jewish society and to a group of non-Jewish men whose religion apparently involved studying the sky for celestial signs of significant events.

② Why is the announcement of Jesus' birth to these two groups of men unique and what do we learn about it during Jesus's ministry?

② As we approach the season when we remember and celebrate the birth of Jesus, how do you respond to God's revelation in your life?



FRIDAY (1/8/21)

Hello, this is Shelley! I have been married to Keith for 19 years and spend most of my time keeping track of our 5 kids (Tommy, Hunter, Joseph, Ben and Anna). I have loved being a part of Riverside and am excited to share with you today.

Today we are looking at **Luke 2:21-40**.

The passage starts off with Mary and Joseph presenting Jesus at the temple to be circumcised.

We then quickly have two new characters show up-Simeon and Anna. I often think of the words that Luke uses to describe Simeon and Anna. Some words used to describe them are righteous and devout, worshipful and prayerful. The Message version described Simeon as “a man who lived in the prayerful expectancy of help for Israel.”

Wow. These are powerful words to describe someone. Simeon was waiting and trusting that the Lord would show up. Someone like Simeon is just at the tail end of the 400 years of silence in scripture. The gap between writing in the Old Testament and Jesus showing up on earth is over 400 years. But here was Simeon, living in the prayerful expectancy of help for Israel. You then read his prayer and read his continued words of prophecy of this little baby.

And then Anna-An older, widowed woman who was in the temple day and night, fasting and praying and worshiping the Lord. For year after year after year. Once she saw Jesus, she felt the need to share with everyone about his coming and how he was fulfilling the promise of a savior of their people.

I am challenged by both of their reactions to Jesus, and their consistency of character as they waited for the coming of Christ. They both immediately recognize him as the one who has been prophesied which means they had to KNOW the prophecy. They had to know their Hebrew Bible. They had to be communicating with God and listening to his voice. Also, their character is recognized by the author and their community. They were known as people who loved God, worshiped God and walked in his ways.

I know this is something I want in my life and I would hope that all of us would strive for. That we would hide God's word in our hearts, that we would take the Lord at his word and that we would not be afraid to shout with joy that we too have experienced Jesus and all that he has done for us.

- ② What are ways that you are daily pursuing the Lord? Do you have a plan for what this looks like?

- ③ Pick one verse to work on memorizing this week.

- ④ If you know someone who is a Simeon or an Anna in your life, take time to encourage them. Take time to ask them what their walk with Jesus looks like.

SATURDAY (1/9/21)

Hi, my name is Shawn and I have been an elder at Riverside for a few years since City Chapel and Riverside merged. A fun fact about me is that I am restoring a '52 Studebaker truck. I am on the 5 year plan, so don't ask me if it is done until 2025.

The passage you are going to read today is **Revelation 19:11-21**.

We have been through the Christmas season, and I am sure you have seen many depictions of the baby Jesus. That can be how many people like to think of Jesus:

“Holy infant so tender and mild”

“But little Lord Jesus no crying He makes”

But here we have a very different picture. The King of kings returning at the head of an army and eating the flesh of his enemies. This is not some namby-pamby Jesus who just wants everyone to be happy.

Some things to consider:

- ② Verse 15 says “He treads the winepress of the fury of the wrath of God Almighty.” Jesus is the one working out the fury of the wrath of God. Does this offend your view of Jesus?

- ② How do you reconcile these two depictions of Jesus? Jesus did come into this world as a baby in a stable. And He is coming back with a sword as depicted in Revelation. Both true.

- ② Which side are you on in this final battle depicted in Revelation? There only appears to be two sides, no middle ground.

SUNDAY (1/10/21)

We've walked through the season of Advent and the days of Christmastide. We find ourselves in the season of Epiphany: discovery.

Spend this sabbath morning resting with the Father. Ask Him to give you joyful discovery in these coming weeks as you journey on with Him.





Know. Be. Do... *Together*

RIVERSIDECOMMUNITY.ORG