



2023

Advent Devotional

Boone Advent Christian Church

Week 1 - HOPE

Day 1 - The Power of His Presence in Hope

Mitch Marlowe

To understand the power of hope, one has to understand what it means to be without hope. Being hopeless is a rough place to be. The doctor says, "I am sorry, but nothing else can be done." The banker saying, "You are too far behind on the note, your home is in foreclosure." The parent of the rebellious teenager shouting, "I don't know how much more I can take!" Hopelessness sometimes is caused by the actions of others. It is sometimes caused by the decisions of our own shortcomings. However it comes, it is a dreadful place to be. Before the birth of Jesus, our world was hopeless. Mankind tried to overcome, but always fell short. The people of Israel experienced misfortune and seemingly the silence of God. They forsook Him. They turned to idolatry and tried to find hope in themselves. Yet, they remained hopeless. Several chapters in the Old Testament reveal this. Particularly this hopelessness is found in Isaiah 56:9-57:12. Mankind's vain efforts to gain hope causes him to fall way short and remain hopeless. Isaiah 57:13 reads, "When you cry out for help, let your collection of idols save you! The wind will carry all of them away, **BUT** the man who makes me his refuge, will inherit the land and possess my holy mountain." The invitation is to find refuge in the God of Hope. There is power in God's presence. It changed everything.

Mary and Joseph had the hopelessness of an unplanned pregnancy. They were forced to travel to pay a tax bill. The time came for a baby to be born and there was no room in the inn let alone for a doctor or midwife to show up. It all seemed hopeless. Then came Jesus. He changed everything! There is power in His Presence!

Day 2 - The Praise of His Presence in Hope

Sara Speed

As children we spent many days wishing and hoping that we would receive the perfect gift on Christmas morning. Most of the time we received the thing for which we hoped. Prior to the birth of Jesus, Israel hoped and longed for a Messiah. Although some missed Him, Jesus becoming flesh and dwelling among us presented the Hope of all hopes.

One definition of hope in Webster's dictionary is "someone or something on which hopes are centered." On a night that was ordinary, yet divine, Jesus came into our world and fulfilled all hope. His birth was in a cave. And the praise began not far away in a field where angels announced His presence to a group of shepherds. Other than His parents, the shepherds were the first to praise the majesty of the Messiah. The hope of that arrived that night in the shepherd's hearts for a Savior, a Conqueror, a King became flesh and the world would never be the same.

Today Jesus is the center of our hope. As we celebrate this advent season, let us praise the presence of Jesus for the hope He gives us. Hope for an eternal future with Him. Truly, "All Our Hope is in Jesus."

As for me, I will always have hope; I will praise you more and more. Psalm 71:14

Week 1 - Hope

Day 3 - The Protection of His Presence in Hope

Cynthia and Richard Townsend

A common Hebrew term for presence is *panim*, which is also translated “face”, this implies a close and personal encounter with the Lord. Isn’t it amazing how taking time to have a personal encounter with the Lord can change your attitude?

It is those times of quiet with the Lord that I am reminded of His faithfulness, His goodness, and His love. Those reminders allow me to handle the trials of life, big and small, knowing that God is my protector. Psalm 46:1 says “*God is our refuge and strength, an ever-present help in trouble.*” This is why I can have hope! I am confident of God’s presence in all things!

Friend, take time today to be in the Lord’s presence and allow Him to remind you of who He is and that you are His.

"Yes, my soul, find rest in God; my hope comes from him. Truly he is my rock and my salvation; he is my fortress, I will not be shaken." Psalm 62:5-6

Day 4 - The Purpose of His Presence in Hope

Mitch Marlowe

King Solomon proclaimed, “There is a time for everything, and a season for every activity under heaven...” (Ecclesiastes 3:1). In other words, in God’s great world, there is purpose for everything. Sometimes it seems that there are small purposes and sometimes there are greater purposes. Sometimes they are good. Sometimes we think they are not. But everything has a purpose. Scripture tells us that God works for the good of those who love Him and are called according to His purpose (Romans 8:28). It may be elementary to think that God had a purpose in sending His Son, but sometimes we need to be reminded. Too often we hear the story so much we forget that God sent His Son for our redemption. That indeed was the overall purpose that God gave us the hope of Christ. It is just as real for us today as it was when the shepherds first received the Good News on that dark hillside. The purpose of the hope of His presence is that He is always with us and we are with Him...forever, and ever, hallelujah! All we need to do, is simply say, “Yes Lord! I trust You through Christ. Thank you for sending Him and providing for me the hope in which He gives!”

Week 1 - Hope

Day 5 - The Passion of His Presence in Hope

Cynthia and Richard Townsend

To be passionate means to have an intense desire or enthusiasm for something. As you may know I am passionate about many things - Tarheel Basketball, dark chocolate, trips to Disney World, and family. If I start talking about any of these topics you are sure to see a smile on my face, you will hear excitement in my voice, and you will notice my hands gesturing - my passion is evident.

I am also passionate about the hope I have in Jesus! My hope is a confident expectation of what is to come based on the faith and trust I have in God's character. When God says he will meet my every need according to the riches of his glory in Christ Jesus (Phillipians 4:19), I believe Him. When God says that He will never leave me, nor forsake me (Deut. 31:8), I believe Him. When God says there is nothing I can do to be separated from His love (Romans 8:39), I believe Him. When God says He is my rock, my fortress, and my deliverer (Psalm 18:2), I believe Him.

I pray that today you can say, ***"May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in him, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit."*** Romans 15:13

Day 6 - The Position of His Presence in Hope

Sara Speed

The world says: It's all about position, status, climbing the ladder, money, cars, the right job and perfection. God says: it's all about humility, meekness, quietness, gratitude and loving each other. Those are polar opposites, huh?

Jesus came into our world humbly, born in a dirty cave, wrapped in cloth and was laid in a trough where animals were fed. Majesty stooping in meekness. Changing His royal robes for a diaper. Leaving heaven to come into a sinful world. His glorious position in heaven was exchanged to be a carpenter's son.

He came in obedience. He came on a mission to bring salvation. He came to show us that to be in the best position of all we must humble ourselves. He came to lead us in a way that is contrary to the way of the world.

Because of Jesus' position of humility, we have great hope. Hope that He promised would be fulfilled.

"Humble yourselves before the Lord, and he will lift you up." James 4:10

Week 2 - Love

Day 1 - The Power of His Presence in Love

Mitch Marlowe

It is hard to imagine in this modern world of modern medicine and hospitals what it must have been like on that first Christmas morning. No heart monitors. No nurses checking on the mother and baby. No high fives from the new dad's brothers. No looking through a window and shouts of "that's my boy!" None of that. Just the sounds of animals in a barn and the cry of a baby every now and then. Jesus was wrapped in a cloth. The older translations called it "swaddling clothes." It is mentioned in Luke 2 in both verse 7 and again in verse 12. A newborn in that day was wrapped in such a way for security, warmth and comfort. Interestingly, what Jesus was given as a baby, He gives to us today. All because of love.

May he be enthroned in God's presence forever; appoint your love and faithfulness to protect him. Psalm 61:7

Day 2 - The Praise of His Presence in Love

Sara Speed

Before Christ was born, praise filled the lungs of Mary after she learned that she would give birth to the long awaited Messiah. God fulfilled His promise and provided the presence of Jesus first to Mary. She responded with a song:

***"My soul glorifies the Lord and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior, for he has been mindful of the humble state of his servant.
From now on all generations will call me blessed, for the Mighty One has done great things for me— holy is his name.
His mercy extends to those who fear him, from generation to generation.
He has performed mighty deeds with his arm; he has scattered those who are proud in their inmost thoughts.
He has brought down rulers from their thrones but has lifted up the humble.
He has filled the hungry with good things but has sent the rich away empty.
He has helped his servant Israel, remembering to be merciful to Abraham and his descendants forever, just as he promised our ancestors."*** Luke 1:46-55

When Christ was born, praise filled the air around the shepherd. The angels filled the air announcing the birth. ***Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace to those on whom His favor rests."*** Luke 2:14

Still today, when we feel His presence we praise Him. His presence evokes worship. His presence prompts our worship. His presence propels us to lift our voice and magnify Him.

I love You, Lord and I lift my voice. To worship You, O my soul rejoice. Take joy my King in what You hear. May it be a sweet, sweet sound in Your ear.

Week 2 - Love

Day 3 - The Protection of His Presence in Love

Tammy Nelson

Joshua 1:9 NIV - *“Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous. Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged, for the LORD your God will be with you wherever you go.”*

Have you been faced with choices in life that you didn't understand why you were given the situation or problem? You became anxious, scared, discouraged, or responded too quickly. Did you talk to a friend or family member who you valued their guidance? Did you pray about the situation asking for God's will or tell him what you wanted selfishly.

Being a Christian isn't always a praise party or days without chaos of life. We so easily confuse the presence of God with the absence of problems and the goodness of God with the absence of problems. People often use their words and actions to discourage us and cause us to doubt his love in our lives.

During some of these seasons in life God wants to show you some things about his loving protection and even about yourself. When we talk to him through prayer and praise him in song, he puts his loving arms around us as a hedge to protect us and help us through the problems.

But if we follow him, his love is like a super-hero shield to protect us from things that will harm and destroy our relationship with him and other believers. The best part of his shield is it completely covers us from head-to-toe on the outside but provides his love inside our hearts.

Yes, we stray off the roads he had planned for us almost daily, but his love is still with us. He puts us in the place he knows we need to be even if we cannot understand. Trust him in every situation and praise him in the storms too. He will never leave you.

Be the person others can see his love through in your daily life. From the mouths of babes~ use kind words, be a friend, help others in need, share your smile to encourage others, the smallest thing you do for someone else in need is the biggest thing in their day, share his love in all you do.

Day 4 - The Purpose of His Presence in Love

Mitch Marlowe

What are you here for? What is your purpose? These questions have intrigued mankind throughout history. Those who answer these questions thoroughly and with much thought have laser focus in all they do. They plan their work and they work their plan. John 1:14 tells us that “the Word became flesh and dwelt among us.” The Word, of course, is referencing Jesus. He became flesh in order to connect to all of humanity and give them the fullness of God and His love. The purpose of His presence in love is to restore a relationship broken by sin. That was and is the laser focus of Jesus, restoring mankind to His Heavenly Father. In turn, we are also called to love. I John 4:19 says, “We love because He first loved us.” Jesus is all about love. Loving the Father, loving others, and restoring relationships in and through His great love. In fact, He gave His all that we might have His all. John 15:13 reads, “Greater love has no one than this that he lay his life down for his friends.” Today, celebrate the ongoing presence of Jesus. Bask in His love and know that He came, He died, He arose, and He lives because of His great love.

Week 2 - Love

Day 5 - The Passion of His Presence in Love

Cynthia and Richard Townsend

I don't know if we will ever fathom the intense, passionate love God has for us. Zephaniah 3:17 reminds us that He rejoices over us with singing. Jeremiah 31:3 tells us that we are loved with an everlasting love. According to Romans 8:39 nothing can separate us from the love of God. Who can forget John 3:16, "*For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.*" What an incredible love our Father has for us!

When we are loved so deeply we cannot keep to ourselves. Jesus commands us in John 15:12 to "*Love each other as I have loved you.*" OH! That's a lot of love to share with others.

Most of us can't wait to share about the good things in our life, and the amazing things we have experienced. This Christmas make sure you share the amazing love of God with friends, family, and strangers. May His Love be evident in all you do and say this season.

Day 6 - The Position of His Presence in Love

Sara

Love. We throw that word around sometimes don't we? We tend to casually say: "I love this!" or "I love that!" Love is more than an exclamation, declaration or fascination. Love is a person - love is Jesus. When Christ was born, everything changed. When Christ began His ministry some thirty years later, He showed love to everyone - yes, even those that were considered unlovable. Jesus' position as the Son of God was never flaunted by Him. He humbly ministered in love. His presence radiated love. He is love! Bill and Gloria Gaither wrote a song entitled "Bethlehem, Galilee, Gethsemane" in 1970. There is a recitation that is in the middle of the song. A portion of that recitation is this:

"Jesus walked with common men. But there was nothing common about His words. They upset every comfortable ethic. He upset judicial systems when He said, 'Love those who hate you.' He upset patterns of religion by declaring that real temples of worship were in the hearts of believers. He refused to discuss laws and rules governing people's actions. But zeroed in on their thoughts and attitudes instead. If Christ had been a philosopher, they could have debated Him. If He'd been a warrior, they could have fought Him. Had He been a religionist, they could have ignored Him as an eccentric. But Christ is Love, what do you do with that?"

God's love for us was manifested in Jesus. In turn Jesus' love for us was on display when He died for us. Jesus was high and lifted up in heaven because He was God's Son. But think about this, those that crucified Jesus (that includes you and me) placed Him in a high and lifted position by hanging Him in a place for all to see. Little did they know just a few days later He would come out of the grave. Conquering death, He once again was high and lifted up as the King of kings and Lord of lords. His position as Master, Savior, Redeemer and soon coming King in our lives is the most important of all.

This is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins. 1 John 4:10

Week 3 - Joy

Day 1 - The Power of His Presence in Joy

Mitch Marlowe

Imagine waiting all your life for the promised Messiah. You have heard your parents and grandparents share the prophecies handed down from generation to generation. You wonder if and when it will come to pass. You are doing your nightly routine, guarding the sheep used for the temple sacrifices. It is like every other night, or so you thought. But this night would forever change your life. Suddenly, the night became bright. Your heart starts pounding with fear. You see a great light and hear someone say, "Don't be afraid." Yeah, right...too late for that! Then you hear again, "Do not be afraid. I bring you good news of great joy." The good news of great joy? Did you hear that right? What starts out as a terrifying experience turns into a promise fulfilled. A prophecy foretold comes to fruition. The power of God is demonstrated in that night sky. The presence of the Divine is overwhelmingly present. Yet, insurmountable joy is experienced. It is indescribable and powerful. It is pleasing and compelling. It is inexplicable yet you have to figure out a way to share it. It is all encompassing and all consuming. It changes your life forever. You discover power. You discover the Presence of Immanuel. You discover joy. So what do you do? You look at your partners and exclaim, "Let's go to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened." You go and see. You are amazed with joy. You go and share.

Luke 2:8-20

Day 2 - The Praise of His Presence in Joy

Sara Speed

We have experienced the joy of being in the presence of family, friends and others that we share common goals or aspirations. Even the joy of being in a large crowd at a sporting event, concert or other production. It is exhilarating isn't it? Your excitement may turn to applause, praise and/or accolades.

It is the same when we are in corporate or private worship. The presence of Jesus is so real. You begin to experience praise because of His presence. You magnify His name. You exalt Him for all the things that He has done for you. You glory in the richness of His presence in your life. You lift your hands and your face to heaven; it is almost as if you can feel the radiance of His presence! Then you find yourself falling to your knees because of His holiness that surrounds. You may even shout!

As we share the joy of this Advent season, remember the true reason we celebrate. Jesus! Worship Him in joy. Praise Him. He is so very worthy of our praise.

"Let's just praise the Lord, praise the Lord. Let's just lift our hearts toward heaven and praise the Lord!"

Week 3 - Joy

Day 3 - The Protection of His Presence in Joy

Cynthia and Richard Townsend

Rick Warren gives this definition of joy: "Joy is the settled assurance that God is in control of all the details of my life, the quiet confidence that ultimately everything is going to be alright and the determined choice to praise God in every situation."

Gareth and Ali Gilkeson, members of the Christian music group Rend Collective, were pregnant with their second child. They were heartbroken when the pregnancy ended with a miscarriage. In the midst of this sadness they chose joy. Ali said, "It was a difficult time when we had to actively pursue joy and find our strength."

"We chose joy, faith, and trust, rather than despair and cynicism. We wouldn't have gotten through that time if it wasn't for God's strength. Most people think that joy is just for happy people or optimists. In a difficult time, joy is what gave us the strength to go on," says Gareth.

This couple made the intentional decision to have joy. During this time the couple wrote "*Joy of the Lord*". My prayer is that as you read the words to this song God will remind you that is your refuge and protection and you can choose to praise Him in all circumstances.

Joy of the Lord

Though tears may fall
My song will rise, my song will rise to You
Though my heart may fail
My song will rise, my song will rise to You
While there's breath in my lungs
I will praise You, Lord

In the dead of night
I'll lift my eyes, I'll lift my eyes to You
When the waters rise
I'll lift my eyes, I'll lift my eyes to You
While there's hope in my heart
I will praise You, Lord

The joy of the Lord is my strength
The joy of the Lord is my strength
In the darkness I'll dance
In the shadows I'll sing
The joy of the Lord is my strength

When I cannot see You with my eyes
Let faith arise to You
When I cannot feel Your hand in mine
Let faith arise to You
God of mercy and love
I will praise You, Lord

Oh You shine with glory Lord of light
I feel alive with You
In Your presence now I come alive
I am alive with You
There is strength when I say
I will praise You, Lord

When sorrow comes my way
You are the shield around me
Always You remain
Like courage in the fight
I hear You call my name
Jesus, I am coming
Walking on the waves
Reaching for Your light

But let all who take refuge in you be glad; let them ever sing for joy. Spread your protection over them, that those who love your name may rejoice in you. Psalm 5:11

Week 3 - Joy

Day 4 - The Purpose of His Presence in Joy

Mitch Marlowe

John 10:10 reads, "*The thief comes only to steal, kill, and destroy. I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full.*" These words of Jesus summarize His ministry: an abundant life. The world sees a full life as one of material possessions. However, Jesus sees a full life as one that is filled with joy. The world thinks joy comes with abundance yet Jesus shows joy brings completeness. We sing that the baby born in manger truly brought "Joy to the World." The reality is that the baby brought the world to experience joy. Life to the full. You see, before Jesus, mankind was bound to redemption through the law which was an impossible task. Jesus, however, restored and perfected our relationship with God Almighty in order that we can experience full life, the way God intended. We got "Joy to the World." Our response should always be, "Joyful, Joyful, We Adore Thee!" *Thanks be God for His indescribable Gift.* 2 Corinthians 9:15

Day 5 - The Passion of His Presence in Joy

Cynthia and Richard Townsend

In Luke 1 we read that Mary goes to visit Elizabeth and when Mary speaks the baby in Elizabeth's womb leaps for joy (v. 44). Elizabeth's baby, John the Baptist, knew he was in the presence of the Lord and was joyful.

The angel who appeared to the shepherd's tells them to "*Do not be afraid. I bring you good news that will cause great joy for all the people.*" (Luke 2:10) The news of Jesus was to bring joy to everyone.

Jesus, the reason for our joy, has not changed. When you say the name "Jesus" aloud it brings joy. His name breaks through the discouragement, the disquiet, and the despair. Speaking His name brings us into His presence where we can leap for joy knowing that He has a perfect plan for each of us.

You make known to me the path of life; you will fill me with joy in your presence, with eternal pleasures at your right hand. (Psalm 16:11)

Day 6 - The Position of His Presence in Joy

Sara Speed

In life it is easy to find joy in the big things that happen to us: a new job, getting married, having a baby or being successful. But what about the little things: the smell in the air when it rains, seeing the flowers, the beauty of the green of the trees, the friend who sent you a text at just the right time, hearing the bird sing, or seeing a butterfly. There are a million more.

But joy really isn't about all of those things listed above - the temporary. Joy is found in the eternal. True joy comes in knowing Jesus. He came to bring us joy. True joy is when things are not perfect and you can still smile. True joy is keeping calm when things fall apart. True joy is when the doctor gives you a death sentence, but you worship as if nothing is wrong.

The Greek word for joy is *chara*. The Greek word for grace is *charis*. See the connection? It is grace that provides the relationship with Jesus and places us into a right relationship with God. His grace in our lives gives us great joy.

(Jesus) "I have told you this so that my joy may be in you and that your joy may be complete." John 15:11

Week 4 - Peace

Day 1 - The Power of His Presence in Peace

Mitch Marlowe

There is nothing sweeter than a beloved companion who is by your side in the joys of life except when that companion is with you in the darkest moments of life. Life is hard. God knew it would be, so He provided the Prince of Peace to be with us in our joys and in our tough times. As a young boy, I had a fear of storms. Sometimes they were quite alarming. My mother always could help me remain calm by reminding me that Jesus was with me. Even as a boy, I knew the presence of Jesus made all the difference. Today, in all of life's struggles, His presence has calmed me time after time. I am so grateful His presence is with me no matter what! He is bigger than any struggle I have faced or ever will face. Psalm 118:6 declares "the Lord is with me." If the Lord is the Prince of Peace, then I will always have peace in His presence!

Day 2 - The Praise of His Presence in Peace

Sara Speed

In a day of ups and downs, pressure from every side, the noise, the strife and all the bad things that can happen, you wonder - "Will I have even one minute of peace in my day?!?" Just about the time that thought enters your mind, Jesus steps in and He whispers gently, "My child, you have your mind on things that do not matter. Trust Me, I've got you. I am with you." Once this happens, your mind focuses on Jesus, the things around you fade into the background, your heart rate slows, your shoulders settle back into normal position and you feel His peace wash all over you.

The presence of Jesus gives peace. Jesus is our peace. Our mindset changes when He is near. Our eyes see things we may not have seen before. Our ears no longer hear the chaos and noise of the day, but the quiet that comes from His gentle presence. Our tongue is loosened to proclaim praise to the only One that deserves it. His presence is real. His peace is real. His peace brings rest.

And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. Philippians 4:7

Week 4 - Peace

Day 3 - The Protection of His Presence in Peace

Cynthia and Richard Townsend

There are days that I feel like David in Psalm 3:1 "*LORD, how many are my foes! How many rise up against me!*" Nothing is going right, one more thing is added to my "To Do List", the meat in the frig has gone out of date, the report from the doctor wasn't what I wanted to hear, and the list goes on and on! When life feels out of control - there is no peace for you (or the people around you)!

I'm so thankful that Psalm 3 doesn't stop at verse 1. Verses 3-6 say, "*But you, LORD, are a shield around me, my glory, the One who lifts my head high. I call out to the LORD, and he answers me from his holy mountain. I lie down and sleep; I wake again, because the LORD sustains me. I will not fear though tens of thousands assail me on every side.*"

No matter what the world throws my way I can know that the Lord is a shield around me! He will lift my head high! I can call out to Him and He will answer! I can lie down and sleep because He sustains me! I can face all the things around me with no fear! The Lord is my peace.

In the chaos of your day take a moment and read Psalm 3. Let our Father remind you that He is your protector and your peace.

Day 4 - The Purpose of His Presence in Peace

Mitch Marlowe

Genesis 1:1-2 reads, "*In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth. Now the earth was formless and empty, darkness was over the surface of the deep, and the Spirit of God was hovering over the waters.*" The very first words of the Bible seem to be far from the Christmas story. However, these words are important to understand the condition of the world before the Baby was born in Bethlehem. The Hebrew word for "formless" is *tohuw*. It means formlessness, confusion, or emptiness. A better summary of these words is found in the word chaos. The creation story begins with a description of chaos. God spoke and created order. When the baby Jesus was born in Bethlehem over 2000 years ago, mankind, like the world, was in chaos. Because God spoke, order was created and chaos was alleviated. Jesus came into this world to alleviate the chaotic condition of mankind. His righteousness prevailed, just as prophecy declared in Isaiah 32:17, "*The fruit of righteousness will be peace; the effect of righteousness will be quietness and confidence forever.*" Does that sound chaotic? Absolutely not. The desire of Jesus is quite the opposite for His children. His desire is peace, peace that passes all understanding! Glory to God in the Highest!

Week 4 - Peace

Day 5 - The Passion of His Presence in Peace

Cynthia and Richard Townsend

Suddenly a great company of the heavenly host appeared with the angel, praising God and saying, "Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace to those on whom his favor rests." Luke 2:13-14

For to us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government will be on his shoulders. And he will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. Isaiah 9:6

Jesus' birth gave the world hope for the coming of peace on earth. Peace brings us rest and contentment. *He makes me lie down in green pastures, he leads me beside quiet waters, he refreshes my soul. (Psalm 23:2-3)*

Peace is not meant to be a private thing between you and the Lord. In Matthew 5:9 Jesus says, *"Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God."* We are called to take the peace we have in Jesus and share it with those around us by offering a word of encouragement, praying for others, taking time to check on someone, or sharing your gratitude for a friend. Take time this season to be a giver of peace.

Day 6 - The Position of His Presence in Peace

Sara Speed

Can you imagine what it was like the night Jesus was born? To be the first to enter into His presence? What did Joseph do when King Jesus arrived? The animals in the shelter of the stable, did they quiet themselves in the presence of the Son of God? The shepherds had to be excited when they arrived. Did they come into Jesus' presence shouting and then fall into a awe-struck silence in adoration of the new born child?

What about when He began His ministry? The disciples were with Jesus the most and we know of at least two that jockeyed for position - or their mother did for them. Many that Jesus encountered came into His presence with requests for miracles. Some came to worship. I think often about the woman that came to Him at the home of a Pharisee and bowed in His presence to wash His feet with perfume and dry them with her hair. What an expensive thing she did. What a lovely thing she did. What a reverent thing she did. In order to wash His feet, she had to humble herself. She had to bow down.

What do we do when we enter His presence? Do we come with demand or delicately? Do we come with worries or with worship? Do we come with platitudes or praises? Do we come with out of requirement or with reverence?

The Cathedral Quartet (my all time favorite quartet) sang a song in the 1980's that spoke of entering God's presence:

*Glory surrounds us,
Blessing await us,
As we come before the King.
Power abundant;
Ours for the asking.
Joy from His eternal spring.*

*Give all your burdens
Unto the savior.
Hear Him say "Peace be still".
Victory in battle.
Comfort in trial.
With His Spirit be filled.*

*Into His presence with singing.
Into His courts with praise.
Be thankful to Him, bless His name.
The Lamb is worthy of praise.
To His gates with thanksgiving.
Hear hosannas ring.
Into His presence with singing.
Praise to our soon coming King.*

The position of Jesus is exalted - He is holy. He is high and lifted up. When we enter to worship and praise Him, we gain peace in His all consuming presence. Experience His peace by entering into His gates with thanksgiving and praise. Listen as He says, "Peace be still."

Christmas Day - The Presence of Jesus in Us

Mitch Marlowe

O come let us adore Him. O come let us adore Him.

It is definitely worth repeating. It is a wonderful response to the greatest gift to all of mankind.

He came just for you.

He came to take away your sin so that you can enjoy and flourish in relationship with His Father.

He came to cleanse.

He came to save.

He came to heal.

He came to calm.

He came to die.

He came so you could live.

Today, may your Christmas be filled with the joy of the presence of God with us and the gift of God in us. Yes,

O come let us adore Him, Christ the Lord!