



Anticipating Jesus

Week One

Day One

"My soul glorifies the Lord and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior" (Luke 1:46-47).

As an unmarried pregnant woman, Mary could have focused on her embarrassment, her inconvenience, and the insults to which she was about to be subjected. She could have lashed out at God in anger and frustration. Instead, she focused on rejoicing in God and giving glory to Him.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, forgive me for my complaints. I praise You with my whole heart.

Day Two

"... he has been mindful of the humble state of his servant" (Luke 1:48a).

Some people might have trumpeted their good fortune through the streets. Some might have swollen with carnal pride that God singled her out instead of choosing another. But not Mary. She expressed a humble attitude that, out of all the world, God chose her to be the Messiah's mother.

Prayer: Dear God of the universe, thank You that I even crossed Your mind.

Day Three

"From now on all generations will call me blessed" (Luke 1:4b).

All generations have indeed thought of Mary as blessed. Not all religions elevate her to sainthood as some have done. Not all pray to her as some do. But she is a woman blessed of God. She is also a woman whose life was a blessing to others.

Prayer: Lord, thank you for blessing me. Help me to bless others.

Day Four

“ . . . the Mighty One has done great things for me – holy is his name” (Luke 1:49).

You and I can say this too, for the Mighty One has done great things for us. We know why Jesus came – to provide a way of salvation for the least, the lost, the last, and the lonely. He also died for “up and outers” as well as “down and outers.”

Prayer: O God, thank You for the great things You have done.

Day Five

“He has performed mighty deeds with his arm” (Luke 1:51).

Who else would cause a special star to appear in the sky? Who else would call it to the attention of eastern wise men? Who else would send angels to announce the birth of the Messiah? Who else would demonstrate such love? Our Sovereign God has performed all these mighty deeds.

Prayer: Father, we rejoice in the mighty deeds You have done.

Day Six

“He has brought down rulers from their thrones” (Luke 1:52).

Wicked King Herod was about to be the next one who would be brought down from his throne. He tried to kill the infant Jesus (Matthew 2:16-21). He failed, but killed many other male babies in the process. Although King Herod died, Jesus, the King of kings, still lives.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, thank You for Your amazing providence.

Day Seven

“He has filled the hungry with good things but has sent the rich away empty” (Luke 1:53).

Often the opposite seems true – the poor go away empty and the rich are filled with good things. But that is the short view. When the rich man died, his wealth proved to be no advantage (Luke 16:19-26). Taking the long view, we realize God always has the last word.

Prayer: O God, you have turned our world upside down – for the better!

Week Two

Day One

“His father Zechariah was filled with the Holy Spirit” (Luke 1:67).

Zechariah doubted the Lord and paid for his unbelief with a period of being mute. But now he is filled with the Holy Spirit. He is an example of what God will do for us. He will bring us out of doubt and into His favor, filled with His Spirit.

Prayer: Thank you, Heavenly Father, for transforming us into Your likeness.

Day Two

“Praise be to the Lord, the God of Israel, because he has come and has redeemed his people” (Luke 1:68).

This helps us with the true meaning of Christmas. Once we get past the shepherds, wise men, star, and manger – all of which are beautiful – we see the real significance of His coming into our world. He invaded our planet to liberate us from sin – to redeem us.

Prayer: We praise You, O God, for paying the price for our freedom from sin.

Day Three

“He has raised up a horn of salvation for us” (Luke 1:69a).

The word “horn” represents power in the Bible. What kind of power does it take to find the lost and rescue those who have wandered? Whatever it takes, He did that for us. The angel said, “Give him the name Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins” (Matthew 1:21).

Prayer: For our full and free salvation, Father, we give you thanks.

Day Four

“. . . to enable us to serve him without fear in holiness and righteousness before him all our days” (Luke 1:74b-75).

“All our days” begin with this day. I cannot conceive of what it will take to “serve him without fear in holiness and righteousness before him all our days,” but I can begin today. I can believe He will give me grace for this day. So by His grace I will.

Prayer: Thank you for your promises, Lord, that encourage me to trust You today.

Day Five

“ . . . for you will go on before the Lord to prepare the way for him” (Luke 1:76b).

Zechariah was speaking about his son, John the Baptist, who would prepare the way for the Lord. John was not the Messiah, but he paved the way for the Messiah. For whom are you preparing the way? Children, co-workers, and neighbors are watching your example. God will grant you wisdom.

Prayer: Father, help me to be the example You want me to be.

Day Six

“ . . . to shine on those living in darkness and in the shadow of death” (Luke 1:79a).

Years later, the apostle Paul would write, “For he has rescued us from the dominion of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of the Son he loves, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins” (Colossians 1:13-14). No one need grope in darkness. Jesus came to bring us light.

Prayer: Thank You, O Lord, for the brightness of your love and grace.

Day Seven

“ . . . to guide our feet into the path of peace” (Luke 1:79b).

The prophet predicted, “For to us a child is born, to us a son is given . . . And he will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace” (Isaiah 9:6). The Prince of Peace came and now we can enjoy peace in our hearts.

Prayer: Father, we rest in your peace, and we thank You.

Week Three

Day One

“And there were shepherds . . . keeping watch over their flocks at night” (Luke 2:8).

Shepherds! Why would angels appear to shepherds, of all people? They were considered less than first-class citizens. Their testimony did not count in a court of law. Yet God counted them worthy to receive the news of His Son’s birth. He still gives good news to those who listen.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, speak now as I listen for the good news You want to give.

Day Two

“ . . . the glory of the Lord shone around them . . .” (Luke 2:9b).

Imagine the contrast: lowly shepherds surrounded by God’s glorious angels! The dark of their ordinary night disappeared in the glory of God’s holy messengers. As someone said, “God

bypassed the important and spoke to the ordinary.” Don’t ever think you’re too big – or too small – for God to care about you.

Prayer: O God, thank You for caring about me, even though I am not worthy.

Day Three

“But the angel said to them, ‘Do not be afraid’” (Luke 2:10a).

Many people have fears during the Christmas season. The angel told Mary, “Do not be afraid.” He also told Joseph not to be afraid. Now the shepherds. What are your fears? Is it relationships? Is it lack of money for the gifts? Listen. God is still saying, “Don’t be afraid.”

Prayer: Thank You, Lord Jesus, for coming to dispel fear then . . . and now.

Day Four

“I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people” (Luke 2:10b).

Have you ever thought about the fact that the word “news” is an acrostic for “North, East, West, South”? That’s only in English, of course. But it reminds us that the angel said the good news of the Savior’s birth is for people everywhere, in every direction, in every land.

Prayer: We rejoice, O Lord, in the good news that travels in all directions.

Day Five

“Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you” (Luke 2:11).

A minister fell asleep at his desk on Christmas morning and dreamed that Christ had not come. There were no stockings or wreaths, no Christmas bells, no hope for the dying mother of a child who came to his door. A nightmare. He awoke and realized the truth: the Savior was born!

Prayer: How glorious is our future, O God, because You sent a Savior!

Day Six

“You will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger” (Luke 2:12).

What a place for a baby – a manger! Admittedly, it was the only clean place in the stable. Imagine what the floor was like with all those animals. Imagine the smell. Yet still today, He comes into the worst places, bringing love, forgiveness, and purity. That’s Christmas!

Prayer: Help me to take your love, Lord Jesus, to those who need it most.

Day Seven

“Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace to men on whom his favor rests” (Luke 2:14).

Did you know that Oliver Cromwell, “Lord Protector” of Great Britain in the mid-1600s, outlawed the celebration of Christmas? He said it should be a solemn day. No gifts, no carols. Thank God

we moved beyond that dismal view and now we celebrate the day when God's glory came to earth.

Prayer: Dear God, along with the angels we sing, "Glory to God in the highest."

Week Four

Day One

"Now there was a man in Jerusalem called Simeon, who was righteous and devout" (Luke 2:25a).

Someone said, "If you ever get your name in a book, be sure it's because you are an example, not a warning." King Herod is a character in the Christmas story, but he behaved badly. Don't be like Herod, a bad example. Instead, be like Simeon – righteous and devout.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, without Your help, I cannot be righteous and devout. Please fill me with these qualities.

Day Two

". . . the Holy Spirit was upon him" (Luke 2:25b).

What kind of man has "the Holy Spirit . . . upon him"? Simeon was a man who lived to do God's will. Nothing was more important to him than being obedient to God and being in the right place at the right time. When Jesus entered the temple, Simeon was there.

Prayer: Lead me, O Lord, to be where You want me to be.

Day Three

“It had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit . . .” (Luke 2:26).

Only a man who lives close to God can ever expect to have things revealed to him by the Holy Spirit. Only someone who reads and studies the Bible can expect to find God’s amazing truths there. Are you in His Word? Is it getting into you?

Prayer: Father, Your Word is a lamp unto my feet, a light for my path.

Day Four

“Moved by the Spirit, he went into the temple courts” (Luke 2:27a).

As an effective athlete listens to his coach, Simeon listened to God. When God spoke, Simeon paid attention. When God said, “Move,” he moved. Consequently, he received the blessing of a lifetime: an encounter with Jesus. If you are obedient, you too will encounter Him.

Prayer: Lord Jesus, help me to listen and obey.

Day Five

“. . . the parents brought in the child Jesus to do for him what the custom of the Law required” (Luke 2:27b).

Just because He was the Son of God, He was not above the rules. The Law said to do this and His earthly parents saw that it was done. None of us is above keeping the rules. So, like the song poet, let’s say, “I will obey the Lord every day.”

Prayer: Father, help me to resist the temptation to cut corners. I will obey.

Day Six

“For my eyes have seen your salvation” (Luke 2:30).

We are not sure how old Simeon was, but he refused to die until he had seen the Messiah. After all, God promised he would see God’s “salvation.” Jesus was called many things: Savior, Lord, Master, but was also God’s Salvation in human flesh, God’s only way of salvation.

*Prayer: Thank You, Lord, that we don’t have to be lost.
Because of Jesus, we can be saved.*

Day Seven

“. . . a light for revelation to the Gentles” (Luke 2:32).

Christmas is a time for light. We light Advent candles, we put lights on our trees and in our windows. But it’s all symbolic. The real light is Jesus. He came into the world to dispel darkness and bring the light of His Word and the light of salvation for everyone.

Prayer: O Lord, help me to let my light shine for You.

Christmas Day

“She . . . placed him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn” (Luke 2:7).

When Joseph and Mary arrived in Bethlehem, there was no room for them in the inn. But like the songwriter, you and I can say on this Christmas Day, “O come to my heart, Lord Jesus. There is room in my heart for Thee.” Receive Him and have a Merry Christmas!

Prayer: Thank You, Lord Jesus, for coming into my heart!