



WHERE LIFE & PURPOSE CONNECT

Grow, Pray, Study for the Week of December 14, 2025

Weekly Prayer

Loving God, As I come to Your Word today, open my heart to receive Your grace. Teach me to build relationships that reflect Your love—spaces where others can find sanctuary, and where I can bring my whole self without fear. Shape me by Your Spirit into someone who carries Your compassion into every connection. Amen.

Monday, December 15

Scripture: Luke 1:24-45

Afterward, his wife Elizabeth became pregnant. She kept to herself for five months, saying, “This is the Lord’s doing. He has shown his favor to me by removing my disgrace among other people.”

When Elizabeth was six months pregnant, God sent the angel Gabriel to Nazareth, a city in Galilee, to a virgin who was engaged to a man named Joseph, a descendant of David’s house. The virgin’s name was Mary. When the angel came to her, he said, “Rejoice, favored one! The Lord is with you!” She was confused by these words and wondered what kind of greeting this might be. The angel said, “Don’t be afraid, Mary. God is honoring you. Look! You will conceive and give birth to a son, and you will name him Jesus. He will be great and he will be called the Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give him the throne of David his father. He will rule over Jacob’s house forever, and there will be no end to his kingdom.”

Then Mary said to the angel, “How will this happen since I haven’t had sexual relations with a man?”

The angel replied, “The Holy Spirit will come over you and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. Therefore, the one who is to be born will be holy. He will be called God’s Son. Look, even in her old age, your relative Elizabeth has conceived a son. This woman who was labeled ‘unable to conceive’ is now six months pregnant. Nothing is impossible for God.”

Then Mary said, "I am the Lord's servant. Let it be with me just as you have said." Then the angel left her.

Mary got up and hurried to a city in the Judean highlands. She entered Zechariah's home and greeted Elizabeth. When Elizabeth heard Mary's greeting, the child leaped in her womb, and Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit. With a loud voice she blurted out, "God has blessed you above all women, and he has blessed the child you carry. Why do I have this honor, that the mother of my Lord should come to me? As soon as I heard your greeting, the baby in my womb jumped for joy. Happy is she who believed that the Lord would fulfill the promises he made to her."

Observation

When Mary receives news that could have isolated her, she runs to Elizabeth, a relative who also carries a miraculous pregnancy. Elizabeth greets Mary not with suspicion or judgment but with Spirit-filled affirmation: "*Blessed are you among women!*" Mary enters Elizabeth's home and finds sanctuary: a place where her fear, wonder, confusion, and joy can all be held.

Application

Christian community is a means of grace—a place where God's Spirit works in and through relationships. Mary and Elizabeth embody this. They create a sacred space where both can speak the truth of their lives and find courage for what God calls them to do. Today, ask yourself, *who is my Elizabeth?* Who is the person I turn to when life is overwhelming? And where am I called to be an Elizabeth for someone else?

Prayer

God, thank You for those who receive me with grace. Help me be a sanctuary for others, offering encouragement and space for Your Spirit to move. Amen.

Tuesday, December 16

Scripture: Romans 15:4-7

Whatever was written in the past was written for our instruction so that we could have hope through endurance and through the encouragement of the scriptures. May the God of endurance and encouragement give you the same attitude toward each other, similar to Christ Jesus' attitude. That way you can glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ together with one voice.

So welcome each other, in the same way that Christ also welcomed you, for God's glory.

Observation

Paul reminds believers that Scripture gives us hope, endurance, and encouragement so we can "welcome each other in the same way that Christ welcomed you." Christian community is to be marked by unity, mutual acceptance, and Christlike hospitality.

Application

Mary found refuge with Elizabeth because Elizabeth welcomed her fully, just as Christ welcomes us. John Wesley taught that holiness is always social, expressed in practical love. True sanctuary happens when we welcome others not as projects or problems but as beloved people of God. Today, consider where you might extend a deeper welcome—to a friend, neighbor, coworker, or even a family member.

Prayer

God of welcome, teach me to receive others as Christ has received me—with joy, patience, and grace. Make my relationships places of holy encouragement. Amen.

Wednesday, December 17**Scripture: 1 Thessalonians 4:9-10**

You don't need us to write about loving your brothers and sisters because God has already taught you to love each other. In fact, you are doing loving deeds for all the brothers and sisters throughout Macedonia. Now we encourage you, brothers and sisters, to do so even more.

Observation

Paul commends the Thessalonians for their love and urges them to "do even more." Their love isn't static; it's meant to grow, deepen, and overflow into the wider community.

Application

Mary and Elizabeth didn't simply tolerate one another; they strengthened one another. Their love increased hope, courage, and clarity for God's calling. Love that "does even more" is part of sanctification—God's ongoing work to make us more Christlike over time. Who in your life strengthens you? How is God inviting you to grow in love—perhaps by listening more deeply, offering encouragement, or showing up in a new way?

Prayer

God of ever-growing love, expand my heart. Help me grow in Christlike affection, and strengthen others through love that "does even more." Amen.

Thursday, December 18**Scripture: Hebrews 2:14-18**

Therefore, since the children share in flesh and blood, he also shared the same things in the same way. He did this to destroy the one who holds the power over death—the devil—by dying. He set free those who were held in slavery their entire lives by their fear of death. Of course, he isn't trying to help angels, but rather he's helping Abraham's descendants. Therefore, he had to be made like his brothers and sisters in every way. This

was so that he could become a merciful and faithful high priest in things relating to God, in order to wipe away the sins of the people. He's able to help those who are being tempted, since he himself experienced suffering when he was tempted.

Observation

This passage speaks of Jesus sharing in our humanity—our weakness, our suffering, our limitations—so that He can help those who are tested. Jesus becomes our sanctuary by entering fully into our experience.

Application

Mary and Elizabeth understood each other because they shared a lived experience. They carried God's promises in their bodies, and they carried one another through fear. Similarly, relationships become sanctuaries when we are willing to share life deeply—not avoiding pain or hiding our own vulnerability. God works through empathy and shared life in Christian community. Who needs you to sit with them in their humanity today?

Prayer

Jesus, who knows my struggles, help me to walk with others compassionately. Let my presence be a source of comfort and strength, just as Yours is to me. Amen.

Friday, December 19

Scripture: Matthew 25:34-40

"Then the king will say to those on his right, 'Come, you who will receive good things from my Father. Inherit the kingdom that was prepared for you before the world began. I was hungry and you gave me food to eat. I was thirsty and you gave me a drink. I was a stranger and you welcomed me. I was naked and you gave me clothes to wear. I was sick and you took care of me. I was in prison and you visited me.'

"Then those who are righteous will reply to him, 'Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you a drink? When did we see you as a stranger and welcome you, or naked and give you clothes to wear? When did we see you sick or in prison and visit you?'

"Then the king will reply to them, 'I assure you that when you have done it for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you have done it for me.'

Observation

Jesus identifies Himself with "the least of these"—the hungry, the stranger, the sick, the imprisoned. Loving others in tangible ways is loving Christ Himself.

Application

Mary found tangible hospitality with Elizabeth—shelter, food, companionship, understanding. Sanctuary is always practical. Acts of mercy are inseparable from genuine

faith. When we feed, welcome, visit, or support someone under pressure, we become the hands of Christ. Where can you offer practical sanctuary this week? A meal? A phone call? A safe conversation?

Prayer

Lord Jesus, help me see You in the faces of those who need sanctuary. Make my hands ready to serve, my heart ready to welcome, and my life a reflection of Your mercy. Amen.

Saturday, December 20

Scripture: 1 Samuel 23:15-18

While David was at Horesh in the Ziph wilderness he learned that Saul was looking to kill him. Saul's son Jonathan came to David at Horesh and encouraged him with God. Jonathan said to him, "Don't be afraid! My father Saul's hand won't touch you. You will be king over Israel, and I will be your second in command. Even my father Saul knows this." Then the two of them made a covenant before the Lord. David stayed at Horesh, but Jonathan went back home.

Observation

Jonathan finds David in the wilderness and "strengthens his hand in God." He reminds David of God's calling and promises. Their friendship becomes a lifeline during David's time of danger and fear.

Application

Sometimes, sanctuary is a word of encouragement spoken at just the right moment. Sometimes it's simply showing up. This kind of spiritual friendship is essential for Christian growth. At Messiah Church, we encourage everyone to be a part of a faith group because this is how we are shaped in community. Who strengthens your hand in God? And whose hand might you strengthen today?

Prayer

Faithful God, give me friends who point me toward You—and make me a friend who brings courage, clarity, and hope to others. Amen.