Love God
Love Others
Share the Good News

SUMMIT CHURCH

Be Jesus Christ to the World

Theme: The Carols of Christmas
Hark, the Herald Angels Sing!

We have a great new way for you to get these Meditation Moments each day directly to your phone. Just text "**med moments**" to **970-426-0700** to receive the **daily Meditation Moment** each morning and start your day grounded in faith and peace.

Weekly Memory Verse:

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

Find a classic and beautiful version of today's Christmas Carol by *Reawaken Hymns* at:
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3P97yj-f4sc

Meditation Moments for Monday, November 30 – Read **Isaiah 42:1-4 and Matthew 12:14-21.** Isaiah 41 called those returning from exile in Babylon to be God's servants, while exposing the emptiness of foreign idols. But chapter 42 introduced a different kind of servant—one who would fully accomplish God's purposes. The servant's primary responsibility, like those of the earlier kings, is administering justice as seen in 2 Samuel 8:15; 1 Kings 3:28; 10:9; Psalm 72:1-2; Isaiah 9:7; 11:4; 16:5; 32:1. But this servant, wo we understand to be Jesus, will have influence that is much greater than that of Isreal's kings because it will not by one nation but ALL **the nations**.

- The prophet said "God's new Servant" would not "use force to accomplish His purpose." Even force used for good causes hurts someone. Instead, this Servant would turn the values of the world upside down. The sign of his victories would be strength for the weak and healing for the broken. When have you seen the weak strengthened? How did that happen?
- Isaiah's first readers hoped for a Messiah but didn't know about Jesus. But Jesus lived as the perfect example of what God called Israel to be in Isaiah 42. We hear these same words at Jesus' baptism in Mark 1:11: "You are my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased". Isaiah's words found their ultimate fulfillment in

Jesus. What does Isaiah 42 teach you about how to carry out Jesus' mission today?

Prayer: *Lord God, as I respond to your call to serve you, guide me by the example and influence of your supreme Servant Jesus, God in human flesh, who defeated evil with indomitable good. Amen*

Tuesday, December 1 – Read **Micah 5:2-5 and Matthew 2:1-6.** We've heard of Bethlehem, but what about 'Ephrathah'? It meant 'fruitful' and was the name of the district surrounding Bethlehem. Matthew said the "Wise Men," visitors likely from the area of Persia (modern Iran), arrived, not with the shepherds but an unspecified amount of time "**after** Jesus was born." Matthew's Greek word *magoi* identified not "kings" but students of the stars. When King Herod called in the chief priests and legal experts, they quickly quoted Micah 5:2. That showed that many Israelites believed this passage pointed to the Messiah's birthplace.

- Roman historians wrote about an ancient prophecy. Many expected a world ruler to arise in Judea. The Romans said Emperor Vespasian must have been that ruler—they missed the true king. The priests and legal experts missed him too, even though they recited Micah's words about Bethlehem. The eastern visitors, hoping this new King would bring the world a fresh start, didn't miss him. How can you keep your mind and heart alert to where God is at work?
- The Magi didn't say, "Where is the one born king of the Jews? We've come to negotiate a treaty" or "We've come to attend one of his meetings." Scholar William Barclay noted in his commentary on Matthew that the magi had "the reaction of adoring worship, the desire to lay at the feet of Jesus Christ the noblest gifts they could bring." As you plan for Christmas, how will you honor Jesus' birth through "adoring worship" this year?

Prayer: *King Jesus, when you were born and the magi sought you as a newborn king, paranoid King Herod tragically took them more seriously than the religious experts. As I enter this Advent season, guide me to grasp the importance of your coming to earth as my king. Amen.*

Wednesday, December 2 – Read **Isaiah 11:1-10.** Isaiah 1:1-9 tells us the prophet Isaiah lived in a time when many kings—whether from David's line or not—were leading Israel astray. Yet he said a day would come when a righteous branch would spring from "the stump of Jesse," David's father. Earlier, in Isaiah 9:6, our memory verse for the week, he said this promise didn't depend on some awesome superhero flying into the scene, but rather "A child is born to us." Jesus was born as a baby.

- This first weekend of Advent we focus on hope as we sang the carol about the angels singing. But hope depends on vision. Isaiah saw the fall of David's dynasty in a vision and he looked beyond it. He saw a new shoot growing from the fallen tree. After 2,700 years, Isaiah's vision has been fulfilled only in small ways. We believe that the birth of Jesus was God fulfilling his promises. This makes it possible to keep believing in those promises. What helps you keep believing that God's future **always** holds hope, even in a world like ours?
- Isaiah said that God's "branch" from David's line would "judge the needy with righteousness and decide with equity for those who suffer in the land." What

obstacles—whether attitudes, resources, or something else—make it hard for the needy and suffering to receive equity and justice today? How can you help make the world look more like God's Kingdom for those in need?

Prayer: *Lord God, your prophets, like Isaiah, spoke at times of crisis and failure. Give me a spirit of prophetic courage that I can make a difference, big or small, to make my world more just and merciful. Amen.*

Thursday, December 3 – Read **Jeremiah 31:31-34, Ezekiel 36:25-28 and Luke 22:20.** About 100 years after Isaiah, the prophet Jeremiah grieved over Judah's (southern Israel) disloyalty, leading to judgment and exile. But he looked beyond the coming crisis to God's enduring mercy. He said God pledged to "engrave" his instructions on each heart open to God's love. He added God's merciful promise: "I will forgive their wrongdoing and never again remember their sins." The prophet Ezekiel offered a similar vision. Centuries later, as Jesus took the cup and said, "This cup is the new covenant by my blood," he was pointing directly to the prophets' promise.

- Jeremiah linked God 'engraving' his instructions on our hearts with God mercifully forgiving our sins. This echoed the stone tablets on which God engraved the 10 Commandments in Exodus 31:18. In what ways do you believe mercy can change a person's way of life? How, if at all, has your experience of God's forgiving mercy in Jesus led you to live more as God wants you to live?
- Jeremiah 31 spoke of return from exile and included pure worship with a knowledge of forgiveness. For us who follow Jesus, his life and work on the cross points not only to what has already been accomplished in Christ but also to what still lies ahead. There is always a future vision for those who follow Jesus. This Advent season, what do you look forward to as God continues to work in your heart and life?

Prayer: *Lord God, please keep engraving your ways on my heart, so clearly and so deeply that nothing I encounter in this life can wash them away. Amen.*

Friday, December 4 – Read **Isaiah 25:6-9 and 1 Corinthians 15:50-55.** The Hebrew prophet Isaiah pictured that God's fully restored rule would be like "a rich feast"—the way rulers in that day marked victories. The prophet was confident that God promised to "swallow up death forever" and "wipe tears from every face." God's banquet was for "all peoples," "all nations," "the whole earth." This Advent, remember: the baby in the manger came to defeat death itself—the ultimate victory Isaiah foresaw. The apostle Paul quoted Isaiah to emphasize that Jesus' resurrection confirmed Israel's hope for God's defeat of death.

- By Jesus' day, many of Israel's religious leaders believed only they would be guests at God's great final banquet. They'd missed a crucial part of the Messiah's work. In one of many massive visions in Isaiah, God is imagined preparing a banquet not just for a chosen few Jewish religious leaders, nor even just the Israelites, but for all the nations. Does your hope for God's "banquet" reach beyond your own church, nation or ethnic group? Can you embrace God's generosity?
- We can think of Jesus' messianic work in three "tenses"—past, present, and future. Jesus **saved** us (past) by his life, death and resurrection. Jesus **saves** us

(present) as we yield ourselves to him each day and join in his mission. The glorious future hope God's people have always held is that Jesus **will save us** as God fully establishes God's reign with no more tears and brokenness. How can you include all three tenses of salvation in your celebration of this Advent season?

Prayer: *O God, what mystery and what love there is in the message that in Christ you did all that's needed to accomplish my eternal salvation. Help me set aside any remaining fear, reservation or rebellion, and trust myself fully to your salvation. Amen.*

Saturday, December 5 – **Isaiah 7:10-16, 8:3-4, 9:2 and 6-7; Matthew 1:20-23.** Isaiah's Hebrew word *almah* meant "young woman." When ancient Jewish scholars translated Isaiah into Greek centuries before Jesus, they chose *Parthenos,* the word for virgin. Matthew, writing in Greek, used this same word to describe Mary's miraculous conception. Seven hundred years before Jesus, the southern kingdom of Israel (where we find Bethlehem and Jerusalem) was Judah which was ruled by King Ahaz. He faced a crisis. Three neighboring kings were plotting to attack Judah, and Ahaz was frightened. The prophet Isaiah told him to ask God for a sign that God was with him. The stubborn king refused, but Isaiah gave him a sign anyway—a young woman would give birth to a son. Isaiah's sign was fulfilled through his own family. His wife (whom he called 'the prophetess') gave birth to a son who would witness God's protection of Israel. Before the boy reached age 13, the plotting kingdoms would lose their power (and they did). Centuries later, Matthew quoted Isaiah's words of promise and applied them to Jesus. Matthew was not confused when he wrote his gospel and he was not misinterpreting Isaiah. He was making the point that Jesus, like that first Immanuel, was a sign sent by God that we might know God is with us in a very real way. He wants us to know God made you to love you and God will never leave you.

By quoting Isaiah, Matthew linked Jesus with Emmanuel—the name that meant "God with us." Later in his gospel, Matthew 18:20 quoted Jesus saying, "Where two or three are gathered in my name, I'm there **with them.**" In the gospel's final verse, Matthew 28:20, Jesus pledged, "I myself will be **with you** every day until the end of this present age." What settings or practices help to make God's presence real to you? What makes God's presence as necessary for you as it was for King Ahaz?

Scholar William Barclay captured Matthew's central message in his commentary on the Gospel with these words: "Jesus is the one person who can tell us what God is like, and what God means us to be. In him alone we see what God is and what [humans] ought to be. In what ways have you made Jesus central to your understanding of what God is like? Has that helped you avoid some of the negative, frightening images of God that some people hold?

Prayer: *Lord Jesus, you didn't stay safely away from this world's brokenness. You were born to be with us, and to save us. Thank you for the hope and comfort your presence can give me. Amen*