



the Joys of **CHRISTMAS**

A 12 Day Devotional Journey
starting **Christmas Day.**

TIMOTHY R. BUTLER

The Joy of Christmas

A 12 Days of Christmas Journey

Through the Joys of Jesus's Life



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Introduction

WHILE WE CAN PUT ON BIG, FANTASTIC CELEBRATIONS, IN REALITY, OUR LIVES SWIRL WITH QUESTIONS. If everything about Christmas is that superficial explosion of celebration, what do we do when the celebration ends?

The first Christmas likewise was situated in a flood of turmoil. It was uncomfortable, to say the least. After enduring months of whispers and accusations that would have plagued them after Mary “was found to be pregnant through the Holy Spirit” (Matthew 1:18), they couldn’t even find a comfortable place for her to have her baby.

Many moments surrounding that first Christmas may not have been joyful for Mary, nor many of the times thereafter. But in the tumult, we are told multiple times that Mary treasured in her heart the things she witnessed about her son. Her act of “storing up” Jesus’s life is one we would do well to imitate.

At Little Hills, we’ve had a tradition each Christmas of celebrating the Twelve Days of Christmas — the days between Christmas and Epiphany — together by exploring Biblical truths about God’s love that come through the Christmas miracle. To “store up” that joy this Christmas, we are going to embark on a journey through a Medieval meditative list, the Joys of Mary, which you may have encountered in the traditional Christmas carol “The Seven Joys of Mary.” Not every list has the same seven points in Jesus’s life, so we’ll explore a total of thirteen as we read the Scriptures together.

A helpful point in this particular journey is to see how Mary’s — and our — joys in the life of Jesus include both the good and bad times He faced. For through all of those, He brought the hope of eternal life to you and to me. The swirl of uncertainty will end as Christmas joy overtakes the world’s deepest darkness.

Timothy Butler
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Part I



Jesus's Birth

Christmas Day: Gabriel Shares the News (Luke 1:26-38)

“And he came to her and said, ‘Greetings, favored one, the Lord is with you!’ But she was greatly troubled at the saying, and tried to discern what sort of greeting this might be. And the angel said to her, ‘Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God.’” — Luke 1:28-29

Gabriel’s appearance to Mary is, to say the least, unexpected. Mary had plans for her life, but being the mother of God’s Son was decidedly not amongst them. God’s plan came crashing in the way of her plans — with the announcement came the brief collapse of her engagement to Joseph.

When God calls us to follow Him in an unexpected way, it is common for that new route to collide with our hoped for next steps in life. We had a very nice plan – thank you very much – and our natural first reaction to a huge change, much less a difficult, huge change is not “joy.” The question we face in those moments is, “Can I take joy in the detour?” Too often, the answer not only starts as a “no,” but becomes a more and more deeply entrenched “absolutely not.” When my attitude descends there, I fight against and flee from where God wants me to be and the prospect of finding joy dims further and further.

Mary, with the Holy Spirit’s help, instead rejoices in the unexpected rerouting and, in that, experiences the first joy of encountering Jesus. Before He was even born, she readily submitted to God’s will and anticipated the wonder of what he would do.

Christmas is a wonderful time for us to ask where God might be moving us towards accepting a different direction. He didn’t ask Mary to do it alone and He doesn’t ask us to either: for Christmas is the reminder of just how far God will go to walk with us.

PRAYER: Lord, a lot of times my situations seem too much for me to bear, even if they are much easier in comparison to Mary’s when Gabriel appeared to her. When everything feels too much and I don’t know how I’ll ever move forward with what you want me to do, help me to be ready to say that I am your servant all the same. Help me to trust that you will work beyond what I could ever do on my own. For I know you will. I pray this in the powerful name of Jesus. Amen.

Day 2: Visiting Cousin Elizabeth (Luke 1:39-56)

“For behold, when the sound of your greeting came to my ears, the baby in my womb leaped for joy. And blessed is she who believed that there would be a fulfillment of what was spoken to her from the Lord.” — Luke 1:44-45

When we follow Jesus along the unexpected paths of His plan, we may wonder if we’re really headed anywhere at all. The Bible doesn’t tell us if Mary had such doubts, but as a human being, she surely had to wonder. All of us know that nagging feeling as we keep trudging forward but feel like there are no clear identifying marks to tell us that we have avoided wandering off into a painful doom or disappointment not yet revealed.

That wondering can lead to paralysis from acting on what God has called us to do. Even when we continue to trudge forward, it can be with a gloominess, feeling isolated from the warm, comfortable life we thought we had before us.

The willingness to walk along the path Jesus has for us allows for another joy, though. For Mary, it comes when she visits her cousin Elizabeth. Not only does she find that Elizabeth herself is expecting a child with a divinely appointed future, Elizabeth and her unborn baby recognize the unborn Jesus and celebrate who He is.

Mary takes this in and offers her famous song of praise to God as a response. She gets a further glimpse at just what Jesus will do and the heavy curtains of isolation get pulled back.

The joy of God making it clear we aren’t lost after all isn’t one just for Biblical times. When we stay in His Word and with His people, He takes those interactions and uses them to show us how He is working within the places we feel the weight of uncertainty and fear, too. May we be ready to take those interactions and respond in joy.

PRAYER: Father, when I get glimpses at what you are doing, help me to be a person of praise. Instead of simply moving on, let my heart rejoice and do so in ways that can point others to you. I pray this in the precious name of the Savior. Amen.

Day 3: Jesus is Born (Luke 2:1-20)

“And she gave birth to her firstborn son and wrapped him in swaddling cloths and laid him in a manger, because there was no place for them in the inn.” — Luke 2:7

There would be plenty of reason for Mary to return to the world of fear and trembling as she prepared to give birth. While Joseph had received his own message from the Lord and married her despite his initial misunderstanding of Mary’s pregnancy, now they were without a place to stay in a far away town.

It is in those darkest of moments we can see the most amazing ways God moves. Mary had a unique glimpse as Jesus was born — she got to see the Savior from the very start. Nearly immediately after, she got to see others willing to listen to God respond to the work He was doing. The story was no longer private to just her and Joseph. Now, shepherds came into the humble scene, praising Him.

When we’re traveling this next year to the places God wants us to be, others are going to cross our paths as they too seek to follow Him. Too often, I am so busy worrying I fail to note how God is moving those around me.

If I can get out of my own head and my own problems for a moment, though, what do I find? Others responding to how God is leading them. Seeing someone else following Jesus in a moment he or she clearly is being led can help us feel what can become merely a cold, intellectual knowledge in our most confusing moments: that He is guiding us too. Even when we’re befuddled at what our next steps ought to be. Especially *then*.

There is a special joy for us when we take the time to notice. Am I ready to see those on the journey alongside me who in a given moment are responding to Him? God’s people, moving imperfectly, but moving together, are there for each of us to encourage each other and to rejoice together.

PRAYER: Lord Jesus, a lot of times, things seem in disarray. When there is no room in the inn of my life at my most desperate points, remind me of how you understand and you have not left me alone. You are there with me in my hardships and you surround me and each of your people with the family of all of those who believe in you. Help me to hold to the knowledge that though things seem out of sorts, your plan is true and I am not alone as I await to see it more fully. I pray this in your precious name. Amen.

Day 4: Adoration of the Magi (Matthew 2:1-15)

“And going into the house, they saw the child with Mary his mother, and they fell down and worshiped him. Then, opening their treasures, they offered him gifts, gold and frankincense and myrrh.” — Matthew 2:11

I struggle enough to see God working in a given moment. What about seeing Him work over a longer time? In their own ways, Mary, Joseph and the Magi were all challenged to that harder task, just as we often are today.

After the initial miraculous affirmation, Mary and Joseph settled into everyday life in Bethlehem. Shepherds incredibly appearing and praising God faded into the far more ordinary demands to surviving day-to-day. How often did God’s promise float through their minds then?

For the Wise Men, they also had to stay focused over a long time. After spotting the star in the sky, they had to prepare for a long journey to searching out for the One the star announced. While in Christmas pictures, everything is compressed together, the Wise Men’s experience would have been spread out over months. Arriving to see the young Jesus took long-term focus.

Our calling today is exactly the same sort. We would like to think every aspect of following Jesus will be a rapid fire succession of clear accomplishments that affirm we are where God wants us to be. That’s not how He usually works. Sometimes God wants us to respond by simply remaining faithful during the quiet day-to-day life. Sometimes His plan for us involves continuing in a direction He has set us on for what seems like an interminable season.

Far from being a fluke of a misguided life, long times of preparation are a common attribute of a faithful, maturing life before our God. We need those times of “sanctification” to grow into the men and women He intends for us to be. Our Lord offers us His strength so we can hold onto His promises during those “normal” times of life we wish would move along to completion.

PRAYER: Father, keeping moving towards the places you want me in life can be so hard. I dart to and fro, thinking I either see you calling me where you are not, or thinking I know best how to get to places when the road seems longer than I would like. Please give me patience and endurance to move step by step on your path even when the destination cannot yet be seen, just as the Wise Men, Mary and Joseph did. I pray in the name of your Son, my Savior Jesus. Amen.

Part II



Jesus's Life

Day 5: Curing the Lame (John 5:1-9)

“Jesus said to him, “Stand up! Pick up your mat and walk.” Immediately the man was healed, and he picked up his mat and started walking.” — John 5:8-9

What should we take away from the long gap between the earliest moments of Jesus’s human life and the start of His ministry? While many tried to make up stories of spectacular (albeit childish) miracles to fill the gaps, but the truth seems more prosaic: Jesus grew up like any child does, yet without sin.

The quiet time between the miracle of Jesus’s birth and the arrival of the Wise Men gave way to an even longer period of quiet. If waiting during the early days before that moment with Magi seemed long, how often did other concerns with survival, the raising of Jesus’s siblings and the like obscure the fulfillment to come from the Savior as life settled down into the usual cycle of days, months, seasons and years?

If, as it appears, Joseph dies during this long stretch, how much did that death occupy Mary’s mind? As hard as it might seem to forget when we have the luxury of that time being summarized for us, Mary could be easily excused for not always thinking about how the epicenter of the salvation of the world was right in front of her.

When we become a Christian, most of us are ready to see God explode on the scene *right now*. But then life goes on and we can quit anticipating. What a joy it is then when something God does punches through the mundane and reminds us that we are right to anticipate. It is no mistake that Jesus’s healings are counted amongst “Mary’s joys” as she — like we today — was reminded that, “Yes, God is still working.”

God is working where you’ve been wondering and it feels quiet. The momentary previews of a world healed are there to help us remember He is with us as we wait.

PRAYER: Jesus, how I wish I could just pray that every injury, every struggle, every problem I face would be healed right now. You didn’t heal every infirmity during your earthly ministry, but offered healing at moments to point all of us to the greater healing you would do for all time. When I see brokenness in my own life, help me not to be bound further earthward, but to look Heavenward and believe in what you are going to do. I pray this in your precious name. Amen.

Day 6: Curing the Blind (Luke 18:35-43)

“And Jesus said to him, ‘Recover your sight; your faith has made you well.’” — Luke 18:42

In the traditional list of “joys” we’ve been exploring, there are two healings included: healing “the lame” and “the blind.” Both sorts of disabilities would be utterly devastating.

We can imagine a bit of this today: when we think of how many different ways we use our sense of sight today and how many tasks are so much harder if we go about them with our eyes closed, blindness is a fearsome prospect. So we get the idea of such an impairment being devastating. Nonetheless, the magnitude of one’s personal devastation in the ancient world would be even greater. There was no hope of medical intervention. There were no agencies or governmental programs or charities waiting in the wings to assist. Blindness relegated one to begging, hinging the blind person’s survival on the generosity of strangers.

When Jesus healed people’s physical sight, He renewed their ability to live. God providing physical sight to the blind is not a common experience in our world today, but the miracle of those healings foreshadowed a greater miracle He offers us today. As He restored vision for those individuals, He also spoke to what every single person who ever has lived – you and me included – needs desperately.

No physical miracle of healing Jesus did points more specifically to our situation and the solution to than this one. We might have physical sight, but without God’s help, *all* of us are blind spiritually. We are reduced to beggars, impoverished by sin and without a single shred of hope of earning a “living” that could right us. Only God’s mercy in taking us from blindness to sight can change our plight (2 Corinthians 4:1-6).

Every time we see someone trust in Jesus, we are seeing God give sight. Physical sight is an unimaginably wonderful gift in this life, but spiritual sight lets us see for all eternity. Praise God that He restores us to sight and praise Him when we witness Him doing that for others.

PRAYER: Lord, there are so many broken situations in this world. Help me to be someone who sees clearly the truth that you have given me even when the situations of life blind me to what you are doing. I may not be able to help the blind to see, but use me Lord as an agent of healing for those blinded to your hope, showing your love and speaking your Word, so that by your Spirit they might see. I pray this in the precious name of Jesus. Amen.

Day 7: Raising the Dead (John 11:1-44)

“Jesus said to her, ‘I am the resurrection and the life. The one who believes in me will live even if he dies, and the one who lives and believes in me will never die.’” — John 11:25-26

“That man will live forevermore because of Christmas Day.” The carol reflects what we often get too busy to pay attention to. Jesus came so that we would live.

Did Mary understand this wonderful joy of Christmas as her Son raised the dead? Seeing someone move from physical death back to life would be breathtaking. We can think of the empty chair at the Christmas table that we would do anything to see filled again. The laugh that still rings in our ears. The secret recipe holiday dish that made our plates complete. The warm smile that just *can't* be missing, but is.

Facing the raw bitterness of death, seeing our loved ones returned to us sounds fitting for the title of a “Christmas joy.” Fitting, yes, but only a hint of the fullness of what Christmas was about. A resurrection during Jesus’s lifetime was, for the family of that person, a cause for celebration, albeit a limited one.

Lazarus receive a respite, but like everyone recorded as resurrected in the Bible, he still ended up dying again. There is but one exception: Jesus. Jesus would overcome death, not just bring a few people back from its clutches. He would provide a permanent fix for what feels to us to be a permanent brokenness.

Jesus’s resurrection shows the magnitude of what Gabriel told Mary her Son would be: not *a* Messiah, but *the* Messiah, the one whom even death itself needed to heed. And that One would then offer His victory to all who believe in Him.

PRAYER: Father, how I yearn for the day death will be no more. A New Year always brings with it the sadness of those who will not celebrate another year with me. Help me to remember the promise behind the twinkle in seeing a few lives restarted. Remind me that there is so much to come when all who trust in you will be resurrected and death will be no more. I pray this in Jesus’s name. Amen.

Day 8: Jesus Teaches in the Temple (Luke 20:1-8)

“Now one day, as Jesus was teaching the people in the temple courts and proclaiming the gospel, the chief priests and the experts in the law with the elders came up and said to him, ‘Tell us: By what authority are you doing these things? Or who is it who gave you this authority?’” — Luke

20:1-2

In any other context, a son’s reading the Scriptures in synagogue, or later the temple, might have been the highlight a mom would treasure of her son’s religious “achievement.” We should all be thankful for everyone who teaches or serves in some way in the church today and helps us to better understand and live according to God’s Word.

For Mary, though, she had a reason for a special joy. Jesus wasn’t an ordinary son and those who heard Him quickly learned the same. His reading of the Word was, accordingly, not an ordinary reading. As He read it, so too He was fulfilling it (Luke 4:21).

Jesus was not limited to applying the teachings of Scripture clearly or helped to unlock new insights into it. Jesus actually was one-by-one fulfilling the Bible, taking promises from hundreds of years before and treating them like the to-do list they were for Him. The one the Bible is about was the one reading to the members of the synagogue. “And as we read this, it is fulfilled.”

We are not able to experience precisely what Mary experienced. We do not have the joy of watching Jesus Himself lead a Bible study or preach a sermon. What we do get to share in is encountering the fullness of God’s Word, finding in it that the One who inspired it *did* sit and teach people as He took the promises given and turned them into the reality occurring.

The joy of Christmas is not the warm fuzzy feeling over God repeatedly promising He loves us. Our joy is that He has acted to fulfill the promises of His love. He promised to rescue His people and Christmas is the critical juncture where the unstoppable Kingdom of Heaven collides with everything in opposition. Christmas points to a day when God will again dwell with His people and we will never need to await His presence again.

PRAYER: Lord Jesus, thank you for not just giving your people a book of your words, but giving us a book that from beginning to end has been a picture of you fulfilling exactly what you said you would do. As I see the fulfillment that came in the Incarnation and every step of your life, help me to feel assured that what has not yet been fulfilled will be. I pray this in your Name. Amen.

Part III



Jesus's Death and Resurrection

Day 9: Bearing the Cross (John 19:14-19)

“And carrying his own cross he went out to the place called ‘The Place of the Skull’ (called in Aramaic Golgotha).” — John 19:17

Jesus’s bearing of the cross sounds like a peculiar act to include in a list of joys His mother experienced in observing her son! As Mary watched Jesus go to the cross, surely there were moments she thought of that first encounter with Gabriel, the arrival of the shepherds and Magi, the whole time when things seemed, well, promising.

When things get tough, keeping my joy contained is never my problem. The “joy” of the cross surely had to be a retrospective joy for Mary, too. Watching her son sentenced to carry the tool of death intended to slowly kill Him, Mary wouldn’t have felt joy but a sense of being utterly blindsided.

We find ourselves blindsided when things go wrong for ourselves or for those whom we love. Joy seems infinitely far off when picking up the pieces when a loved one gets a terminal diagnosis or filling boxes to empty out our cubical after being laid off. In these sorts of moments, I want to ask God, “Things seemed to be going so well, why this?”

We want God to smooth things out. We want to reset and go about our merry way without constant challenges and interference. I get nervous when Jesus talks about bearing my cross with Him (Matthew 16:24), don’t you? We need to remember He never asks us to endure anything beyond what He took on for us.

Whatever jumped through Mary’s head in the moment, looking back she knew the agony was not a sign God’s plan failed, but a testament to the love Jesus has for her and every human being ever. The fact that the Father loves us so much that He sent His son to die for us tells us all we need to know about His care for us.

Even troubles we go through that have no identifiable purpose will be made right because of the far greater tribulation Jesus went through. Jesus came to take our sin upon Himself and in that locale, He finished the invasion of God’s Kingdom goodness Christmas began.

PRAYER: Father, what a hard to comprehend thing that you would send your Son to be born so that He would die for me. Yet you did. Please help me to find joy even in the hardships of my life, knowing that every broken thing will be made right because of what happened on that Cross. I pray this in your Son’s name. Amen.

Day 10: Resurrection of Jesus (Matthew 28:1-10)

“He is not here, for he has been raised, just as he said. Come and see the place where he was lying.” — Matthew 28:6

As the Christmas season starts to wane even for those of us who observe the Twelve Days, I can't help but starting to do some math in my mind: just 355 days until Christmas again. Sigh.

Though neither the day nor its place in the calendar year are specified by the Bible, there's a certain appropriateness that our celebration of God-with-us comes at the end of the year: as the year culminates, we observe the culmination of salvation: God with us. But as with all annual observations, it passes and everything resets.

Imagine the best parts of Jesus's life, outside of His coming to save us. If that were all there were, then His death would in a sense be like that “reset” of the year. People rejoice when someone is born and mourn when someone dies. As we may be mourning, though, others are celebrating another birth. Are we just watching an infinite, meaningless loop of life?

No, the story launched on Christmas wasn't a circle like our years are and history can appear to be. Jesus was born and then died, but He died and then was resurrected to put an end to loop humanity was stuck on. Resurrection breaks the loop.

The celebration of Easter is the fulfillment of the promise of Christmas. Without Easter, Christmas is a mere momentary blip, a few years that God walked alongside us amid thousands of hopeless years when He did not. Thankfully Easter *did* happen, so when we celebrate that God came into the world, we also can celebrate that God overcame death and thus we can come into God's world, His kingdom, each and every day. The most beautiful earthly Christmas moment pales in comparison.

As we go through the year, those two celebrations do not merely point us back to the other. They point straight ahead to the day when God heals everything that is broken and everyone who trusts in Him will be in His light forever.

PRAYER: Lord, please help me to not see the celebration of Christmas (or Easter) as a momentary joy in the year, but a constant point of wonder over what you have done for me. In grief over those I love who have passed, give me hope in the resurrection. In uncertainty about my own life, please give me the same. In your powerful name, I pray. Amen.

Day 11: Wearing the Crown of Heaven (Philippians 2:4-11)

“As a result God highly exalted him and gave him the name that is above every name...” —
Philippians 2:9

Though Mary was no longer able to see her son fulfilling His purpose after His ascension into Heaven, she did get to take joy in knowing that the story wasn't over. And so do we.

Jesus does not walk in the flesh on Earth today. That should never cause us to think of Him as merely someone who lived in the past, like a great emperor or philosopher, however. He isn't consigned to history.

Neither should we think of Him as someone still there but distant. Jesus did not write off your and my part of history as something to be handled by someone else. He is the loving, caring King actively reigning in Heaven until the day that He comes back to make all things new.

I do not know precisely why God's timing is what it is, but the way He preserved His people throughout the New Testament after the Ascension and the way He has continued to enable His church to grow and survive in the two millennia thereafter tells us that He has never stepped away. Each day we follow Him, His promise to be with us “until the end of the age” is continuing to be fulfilled (Matthew 28:20).

His reign that shines through His continuing church will one day be so much more present still. The full glory belonging to Him will one day become unmistakable reality for every person. We know that as His name is the name at which every knee should bow, someday every knee *will* bow.

Misunderstood, that could turn the comfort of His continuing presence into something for us to fear. His holiness would be overwhelming if our efforts were all we had put to put up in contrast to His holiness. Thankfully, they are not.

Because He came and died for us, we do not look to the fearful point of His return, but the joy filled. The one who reigns in Heaven will return as the loving, perfect King of His people. If we trust in Him, we are that people whom He loves and will show perfect care to for all eternity.

PRAYER: Lord Jesus, as the Apostle John prayed at the end of Revelation, I pray “come quickly.” What joy it will be when you are here to make all things new. As I live in the time before your return, remind me of your present reign and help me to live as one belonging to the perfect King, knowing I am loved and that I will be able to be in your presence, because of that love. I pray this in Your Name. Amen.

Day 12: The Gift of the Holy Spirit (Acts 1:10-2:4)

“All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit, and they began to speak in other languages as the Spirit enabled them.” — Acts 2:4

Even things I am looking forward to can seem almost joyless if they are in the distant future. A reason to ache over their “not-yet-ness,” rather than a point of excitement. In the cold of winter, even if you’re looking forward to a refreshing swim in the pool or a delightful barbecue dinner on the patio, does it really do much for you as you trudge in a cold winter’s sleet?

When we think of Christmas two millennia behind us and Jesus’s return an indeterminate time ahead of us, it can feel the same way. Sure, there was warmth; sure, there will be warmth. But, right now our lives are covered in a wintery mix that is just bitter cold.

Yesterday, we talked about Jesus being with us every step of the way, but how? Pentecost, the last point in the story where we encounter Jesus’ mother, is the crucial point for us still today. As she gathered with the Apostles and other early disciples in the Upper Room, they encountered the amazing gift of God’s constant presence with His people. Jesus was serious when He said they were not left alone as He ascended. He’s serious about that truth for us, too.

As Jesus came in the world in the flesh at Christmas, His Spirit comes into our hearts today. If you have asked Jesus to be your Savior or if you never have, but ask today, the gift of His Spirit being there with you is a present reality.

The joy of Christmas is much more than a historical remembrance or a future anticipation. The joy is that through all of the “joys” we have looked at on this journey, God-with-us is the reality for each of us, not a past to wistfully remember or a future to merely hope for. We are those invited to be with God each and every day.

PRAYER: Father, as I go into this New Year, I often forget that the closeness of your presence is not contained in a holiday or two. Help me to trust you each day as the God who walks through this life with me. And through that trust, give me the confidence to answer your calling every day this year, knowing I am not alone this year or any year. In Jesus’s Name I pray. Amen.

Epiphany: Treasuring These Things (Luke 2:41-52)

“But his mother kept all these things in her heart.” — Luke 2:51

Mary kept seeing God work in mighty ways and what did she do? We’re told she treasured these things in her heart. When we read of how He has worked and when we see prayer answered today, do we store up both those past and present acts like she did?

The beauty of going on a journey like this one together is that it encourages us to build a storehouse of wonder about God’s working in our own hearts. Mary was not doing something unique to her — we can do it too if we are willing to stop and reflect.

The blessing of treasuring the acts of God, be they those points He is acting in others’ lives or our own, is that His Spirit is the expert librarian who will pull those books of treasure off our shelves in despair flooded moments. He will remind us of who He is and thus who He will be even when we have started to lose sight. God *is* with us today, but that truth is easy to miss. If I am always focused on the next thing without first spending time thanking Him and remembering what He has done, I can miss His present comfort when things are going wrong. I can bog down in life’s uncertainties, despairing He could ever do those very things my mind keeps bounding onward to.

There are a lot of good things to resolve to do this New Year, but as we reach the end of a season that keeps reminding us to meditate on what He has done, may we not reach the end of meditating on what He has done. He will act in ways big and small this year and those past acts are gifts from Him, guarantees of His continuing love for us in the year ahead and eternity beyond.

This devotional journey’s end, like the end of the yearly celebration of Christmas, should not be a stopping point. May this be a year we spend time experiencing the joy of treasuring God’s goodness and feel His peace when we need it the most.

PRAYER: Lord Jesus, as I reach the season of Christmas on the calendar this year, help me to keep storing up what you have done over all time, including remembering what you are continuing to do for me right now. Help me to keep hold of that “treasure chest” of memories so that when the toughest moments of this year hit, I am anchored in the vastness of your faithfulness. I pray in Jesus’s name. Amen.

Next Steps

Thank you for joining me on this devotional adventure over the Christmas season. If you are looking to explore the Scriptures further and experience some of that adopted family of God we discussed above, I would like to invite you to take advantage of the following opportunities to do just that from the two ministries I serve with.

Little Hills Church

We are a new church in St. Charles, Missouri and we would love to have you join us as we seek to share the love of our amazing God with our neighbors near and far. Launched in 2020, we have embraced being a “hybrid church,” seeking to use both online and in-person avenues to do ministry in our community and around the world.

Interested? Please visit us on the web at www.littlehills.church to find out more about how you can get involved. You can also follow us on social media @LittleHillsChurch (on Facebook, Mastodon/the Fediverse, YouTube and Instagram) and @LittleHillsC (on X).

FaithTree Christian Fellowship

FaithTree aims to connect believers from different churches for worship, prayer and thought-provoking conversations about faith, while making a welcoming space for people who are not yet sure what they believe. We are a ministry led by and rooted in local churches; you can learn more about our story at www.faithtreecf.org or on social media @FaithTreeCF. Please check out our calendar of events and join us soon!

Questions? Comments?

Are you wanting to know more about who Jesus is? Do you have a question about the Bible? Would you simply like to provide feedback on this devotional booklet? Please feel free to e-mail me at timothy.butler@faithtree.com. I am always happy to hear from you!