

my rebellion, and you have given me the promise of heaven and the Holy Spirit to empower me there. You are greater than I can imagine and your glory is without comparison, yet you have stooped so low as to reach me and then raised me back up with you by your grace. I can never fully thank you, for you are more wonderful to me than my words can declare or a thousand years of life could repay. Through Jesus I give you all glory and praise. Amen.

Sunday

An angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, "Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary home as your wife, because what is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. She will give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins." Matthew 1:20-21

Jesus first had to become the sins of the people before he could save them (us) from those sins (2 Cor. 5:21; 1 John 4:10). His own people rejected him before his forgiveness could be received. Jesus' gift of salvation was incredibly costly to him. It is a reminder of two great truths: God loves us incredibly and salvation is a precious gift.

Almighty God and Saviour, thank you for bearing the cost of my sin in Jesus. Thank you precious Lord, for taking on human flesh, bearing its difficulties, facing rejection so I could be saved. My salvation makes all other names pale in comparison to Jesus, through whom I offer all thanks and praise. Amen.

Adapted from Heartlight Daily Verse by Phil Ware

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One Minute in the Morning

Monday

The Lord himself will give you a sign: The virgin will be with child and will give birth to a son, and will call him Immanuel. Isaiah 7:14

God is interested in us personally. So much so that he personally gives us this sign. Because of Matthew's explanation of the meaning of the name Immanuel, we know what that sign was - Jesus coming to live as God with us. His presence is God's presence. His life is God's sign. The miracle of his conception is God's mystery and also his statement of grace for us.

Holy and Almighty Lord who refuses to be detached and far away: I thank you for coming to live among us in Jesus. I thank you and praise you for your sacrifice and pain. I know this sign cost you greatly so please let my praise in prayer, song, thought and life reflect my thanks to you in Jesus. Amen.

Tuesday

When the time had fully come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under law, that we might receive the full rights of sons.
Galatians 4:4-5

God waited until history reached his appointed time and sent Jesus. Just the right time -- Roman rule, Jewish subordination, good roads, freedom, a degree of safety, a common trading language, cruel and barbaric punishment accompanied by religious infighting. In times such as these, he sent his Son to be a woman's son. He emptied his home so he could send a redeemer to our home. He did it so we could be his children -- not pretend children, but real children, with full rights. So he could not only be God, but so he could be Abba.

Abba Father, even your name is precious to me. I gasp at how much it cost you to let me call you Abba. I don't understand such extravagant love, but I thank you for it. I know I don't deserve to call you Abba, but it sounds so right. Something inside resonates at the sound of Abba -- Holy, Righteous, Almighty, Abba! While I know that I will never be a perfect child, I rest today in the

confidence that I am your child and that you claim me. Thank you in Jesus. Amen.

Wednesday

When King Herod had called together all the people's chief priests and teachers of the law, he asked them where the Christ was to be born. "In Bethlehem in Judea," they replied, "for this is what the prophet has written: 'But you, Bethlehem, in the land of Judah, are by no means the least among the rulers of Judah; for out of you will come a ruler who will be the shepherd of my people Israel.'"

Matthew 2:4-6

"The first will be last and the last will be first." That's one of Jesus' favourite sayings. Isn't it interesting that God said it long before he was born. Isn't it interesting that those who knew the Scriptures, but didn't know Jesus, said it too! Isn't it interesting that Herod and Jesus lived it thirty years before Jesus would teach it? Isn't it interesting that Jesus gave us the Lord's Supper to remember that while Jesus died and shed his blood, on the first day of the week, Sunday, he rose? When it matters most, Jesus and his people will finish first!

You, O Lord, are marvellous. You are God Almighty, the holy and majestic Creator. Yet you became the least so I can share in your glory. Please help me, O God, never to look down on someone else because they look like the least. I know, Father, that as I serve and love them, I'm serving and loving you. In Jesus name I pray. Amen.

Thursday

God sent the angel Gabriel to Nazareth, a town in Galilee, to a virgin pledged to be married to a man named Joseph, a descendant of David. The virgin's name was Mary. The angel went to her and said, "Greetings, you who are highly favoured! The Lord is with you."

Luke 1:26-28

Wow! Such a familiar sentence packed with emotion. An angel comes to Nazareth to visit and speak with a young woman engaged to be married. Before the history-shattering news is announced, she is given one key reminder that will be truer than she could imagine, "The Lord is with you."

My request, O God, I've sung many times: "Be with me Lord, I cannot live without Thee. I cannot bear to take one step alone." Father, I need your abiding presence to face the challenges of life.

As you have upheld your children through the ages, I am thankful to greet each day knowing that I will not face it alone. In Jesus' name. Amen.

Friday

The angel said to [Mary], "Do not be afraid, you have found favour with God. You will be with child and give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus. He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give him the throne of his father David, and he will reign over the house of Jacob forever."

Luke 1:30-33

Jesus is identified by many names stated or implied in the four Gospels (Matthew, Mark, Luke, John). Notice how Jesus is identified in just this one passage: child, son, Jesus, great, Son of the Most High, King, son of David, and leader of Israel (Jacob). Jesus exhausts all descriptions, and yet chose to be limited to imperfect descriptions by becoming human. But this flood of names and descriptions helps us find Jesus a Saviour in every trial and blessing of life. Jesus is Saviour for all seasons.

Holy and Almighty Father, I thank you for all the ways Jesus is described and all the names he is given. They help me see the breadth of his nature and the depth of his character. Please bless me so I may always find a dimension of Jesus' ministry or a name or description of Jesus to help sustain me, when I walk through the shadows of doubt caused by the evil one. Help me, O Father, to see Jesus and not my preoccupations and biases so that when he comes again, I will know him, and he me. Through the glorious name of the Saviour I pray. Amen.

Saturday

Mary said, "My soul glorifies the Lord and my spirit rejoices in God my Saviour.... The Mighty One has done great things for me - holy is his name."

Luke 1:46

While Mary's submission to God's will costs her in ways we can never imagine, for Jesus to come to life in the hearts of people today our attitude must be the same as her attitude was on this night of miracle and mystery. We too, must be willing to be the Lord's servant and offer him the praise of our lives and of our lips. In Jesus, the Lord has done great things for us!

Majestic Father, Almighty God, you have done wonderful things for me. You have saved me from sin, you have paid the price for