

In these words we, too, see heavenly glory and eternal salvation, for we see the Savior. Here all darkness must vanish. All fear is turned to gladness. Let us seek and see the Savior in His Word, that we may be sure of being His in faith. Let us tell others of Him. Let us keep His Word and ponder it in our hearts. Let us joyously glorify and praise God for His great mercy.

PRAYER. – Gracious and merciful God, I give thanks to You, that You did not leave us poor, lost sinners in darkness, but did send us the promised Savior, the true and eternal Light, and did cause Your Word to be preached to us. O faithful God, cause this light to shine into my poor heart, that, enlightened by true faith, I may constantly magnify and praise You – through the same – Your Son, Jesus Christ, our Lord and Savior. Amen.

Hymn 141, 6. 7.

Lord, Thy manger is so bright | Night sends forth a novel light;
Darkness must not enter there, | Faith abides in light fore'er.

Praise to God the Father sing, | Praise to God the Son, our King,
Praise to God the Spirit be | Ever and eternally.

Crumbs – Good News for the Diaspora!



Illustration:

Elizabeth Receiving
the Visit of Mary

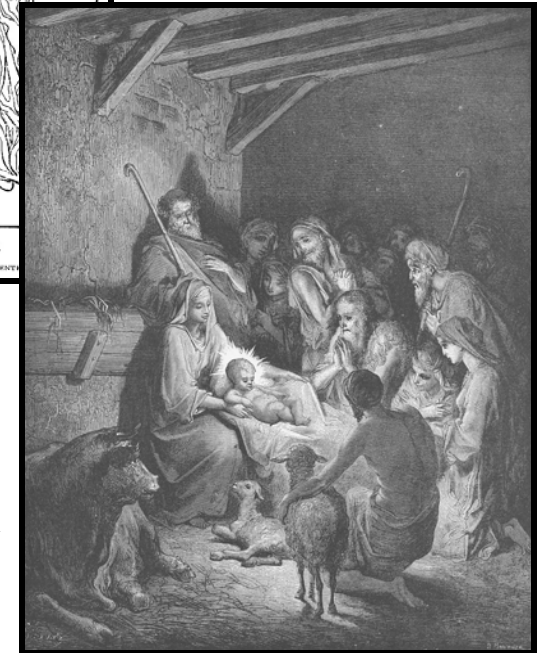


Illustration:

The Nativity of Our Lord

These devotions are adapted from *Crumbs* by C. M. Zorn (1914).
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A Devotional for the
Fourth Week in Advent.

SUNDAY.

Hymn 156. 2. 3.

When the fullness of the time was come. – Galatians 4:4.

We will now speak of the time when God, according to His eternal counsel, began to fulfill all the prophecies and promises regarding the coming of the Savior. For four thousand years the congregation of believers had waited for this time to come. Many a time they had yearned for the Savior, crying: “Oh, that You would rend the heavens, that You would come down!” Many a time their eager, anxious question was, “Watchman, what of the night? Watchman, what of the night?” The stars of prophecy and promise shone bright and clear, and filled the night with splendor. But, despite that, it was night. The light of dawn did not yet brighten the eastern sky, and the Sun, the eternal Sun, did not yet rise. Generation upon generation of believers had been gathered to their fathers – waiting, hoping, trusting – that the fullness of time would come. And their waiting, hope, and trust was not to be put to shame. The fullness of time did come. The Apostle says, inspired by the Holy Ghost: “When the fullness of the time was come.” He speaks of that which has actually come to pass.

The dawn has appeared, the Sun has arisen, fully 1900 years ago. The present-day congregation of believers, looking back in faith upon what has come to pass, joyfully shouts: “Hallelujah! Christ has come!” All the promises of God in Him are “Yes,” and in Him “Amen,” to the glory of God. God always makes good His promises. He will surely also fulfill all the promises pertaining to the eternal kingdom of Christ, the Kingdom of Glory. No promise shall fail. Meanwhile, may His Word uphold us!

PRAYER. – Lord God, You have fulfilled Your promise. You have sent Your Son. You have sent us our Savior. The Sun did arise, and He gives light to us in Your Word. Therefore we are glad. Hallelujah! O Jesus, my Sun, my Lord, shine within my heart, and dispel all the shades of night! O You – Spirit of the Father and of the Son – let me live and die in faith, and thereafter let me arise with joy and enter eternal life. Amen.

O wondrous joy, | That God most high
Should take our flesh, and thus our race should honor;
A virgin mild | Hath born this Child
Such grace and glory God hath put upon her.

Sin, brought us grief; | But Christ, relief,
When down to earth He came for our salvation;
Since God with us | Is dwelling thus,
Who dares to speak the Christian’s condemnation?

SECOND CHRISTMAS DAY.

Thus saith the Lord: The people that walked in darkness have seen a great light; they that dwell in the land of the shadow of death, upon them hath the light shined. – Isaiah 9:2.

And there were in the same country shepherds abiding in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night. And, lo, the angel of the Lord shone round about them; and they were sore afraid. And the angel said unto them: “Fear not; for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord. And this shall be a sign unto you: Ye shall find the Babe wrapped in swaddling-clothes, lying in a manger.” And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God and saying: “Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men.” – And it came to pass, as the angels were gone away from them into heaven, the shepherds said one to another: “Let us now go even unto Bethlehem, and see this thing which is come to pass, which the Lord hath made known unto us.” And they came with haste, and found Mary and Joseph and the Babe lying in the manger. And when they had seen it, they made known abroad the saying which was told them concerning this Child. And all they that heard it wondered at all those things which were told them by the shepherds. But Mary kept all these things, and pondered them in her heart. And the shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all the things that they had heard and seen, as it was told unto them. (Luke 2:8-20).

Joseph had been told by God, through an angel, that Mary, his espoused wife, was that virgin of whom Isaiah had spoken (7:14), and in obedience to the command of God, he had taken her unto himself. But that was in Nazareth of Galilee, and, according to the prophecy of Micah (5:1), Christ was to be born in Bethlehem of Judea. And so it came to pass in those days that there went out a decree from Cæsar Augustus that all the world should be taxed. This was the first taxing of its kind. And all went to be taxed, every one into his own city. And Joseph also went, with Mary, his espoused wife, to Bethlehem, the city of David, because he was of the house and lineage of David. And while they were there, the days were accomplished that Mary should be delivered. And she brought forth her first-born son, and wrapped Him in swaddling clothes, and laid Him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn. (Luke 2:1-7.)

Christians! Unto us this Child is born, unto us this Son is given – to be our Redeemer. A poor babe He lay there in the manger, but the government of heaven and earth was upon His shoulders. Was not that Wonderful? This Child Himself is the Wonderful, for He is God and He is man, and His conception and birth were supernatural. This Child is the Counselor who counsels and helps us lost and condemned sinners when we are utterly at a loss for counsel and help. He is the mighty God who bruises the devil's head and saves us. He is the everlasting Father unto us, His redeemed; we are to be His blessed children, here in time and hereafter in eternity. He is the Prince of Peace; for His subjects have peace of heart and conscience, until the rivers of eternal peace shall refresh them forevermore. O you Christians, embrace this Child in true faith!

PRAYER. – Lord God, Heavenly Father, I give thanks to You for Your great mercy and kindness in having Your Only-Begotten Son become flesh – thus graciously saving us from sin and eternal death. I pray You, enlighten my heart by Your Holy Spirit, that I may remain thankful for such grace, and comfort myself with the same in every tribulation and temptation, and so be eternally saved through Him, my Savior. Amen.

Hymn 146, 2. 3.

What the fathers most desired, | What the prophets' heart inspired,
What they longed for many a year, | Stands fulfilled in glory here.

Abram's promised great Reward, | Zion's Helper, Jacob's Lord,
Him of twofold race behold, | Truly came, as long foretold.

MONDAY.

Behold, I will send my messenger, and he shall prepare the way before me. – Malachi 3:1.

Immediately before the appearance of Christ, a messenger or preacher, was to come who, by most impressively preaching repentance, should prepare the Savior's coming into the hearts of men. This had been prophesied three times. (Isaiah 40:3-5; Mal. 3:1 & 4:5-6) And when God, in a miraculous way, sent word that this preparer of the way should be born, there appeared the first glimmer of the dawn of breaking day, the day of the fulfillment, of all prophecies. Hear how it was done.

In the days of King Herod there lived in the land of Judea a priest named Zacharias, and his wife's name was Elisabeth. They were both sincerely pious. And they had no child, and were now well stricken in years. One day, while Zacharias was burning incense in the temple, and the multitude of the people prayed outside, in the court of the temple, there appeared to him an angel of the Lord standing on the right side of the altar of incense. When Zacharias saw him, he was troubled. But the angel said to him, "Fear not, Zacharias; for thy prayer is heard, and thy wife shall bear thee a son, and thou shalt call his name *John*. And thou shalt have joy and gladness; and many shall rejoice at his birth. For he shall be great in the sight of the Lord, and shall drink neither wine nor strong drink; and he shall be filled with the Holy Ghost, even from his mother's womb. And many of the children of Israel shall he turn to the Lord, their God. *And he shall go before Him in the spirit and power of Elijah* to turn the hearts of

the fathers to the children and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just, *to make ready a people prepared for the Lord.*” Zacharias said, “Whereby shall I know this? For I am an old man, and my wife well stricken in years.” The angel answered, “I am Gabriel, that stand in the presence of God, and am sent to speak unto thee, and to show thee these glad tidings. And, behold, thou shalt be dumb, and not able to speak, until the day that these things shall be performed, because thou believest not my words, which shall be fulfilled in their season.” And Zacharias remained speechless until his son John was born. (Luke 1:5-25).

O you Christians, do not despise contemplating – both with eye and heart – the time when the precious wondrous deeds of God for our salvation was accomplished!

PRAYER. – Most heartily do I give thanks to You, most merciful and true God, for having fulfilled Your Word given through the prophets, and for causing that day of salvation to dawn which so gladdens my heart. Let this, Your work, I beg You, be the light of my eyes, and the joy of my heart, that my faith may be true and well grounded – not on anything that I may have done – but solely on what You have graciously perfected, and on Your Word, which is firm and unchanging, even as You are, God, blessed forever. Amen.

Hymn 147, 4.

Th’ eternal Light, come down from heaven,
Hath to us new sunshine given;
It shineth in the midst of night,
And maketh us the sons of light. Hallelujah.

TUESDAY.

Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call His name Immanuel. – Isaiah 7:14.

His people by the remission of their sins, through the tender mercy of our God, whereby the dayspring from on high hath visited us, to give light to them that sit in darkness and in the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the way of peace.” (Luke 1:57-79)

PRAYER. – Lord Jesus Christ, You are the dayspring from on high; You are the eternal Son of the Father, our Light and Salvation; You have appeared and You do give light to us who sit in darkness and in the shadow of death, and have guided our feet into the way of eternal peace. In You, Lord Jesus, is our salvation, the forgiveness of all our sins. What tender mercy of our God! You, our God, have truly kept Your Word – You have raised up a horn of salvation for us, which is Jesus Christ, our Lord, the Son of David. Through Him, You have saved and delivered us out of the hands of all our enemies, that now we are like Your own, and may serve You with joyful, childlike hearts all the days of our life, until You shall take us home. Praise and glory be to You, O God of mercy! Grant that I may always keep Your Word through which You impart to me all Your salvation – divine power to firmly believe what Your Word teaches regarding this salvation. Amen.

Hymn 147, 5.

The Father’s Son, God ever blest,
In the world became a guest;
He leads us from this vale of tears,
And makes us in His kingdom heirs. Hallelujah.

FIRST CHRISTMAS DAY.

Unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given. And the government shall be upon His shoulder; and His name shall be called Wonderful, Counselor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace. – Isaiah 9:6.

This is the prophecy – the fulfillment of which – Christendom celebrates today.

Jesus, guard and guide Thy members,
Fill Thy brethren with Thy grace,
Hear their prayers in every place,
Quicken now life's faintest embers;
Grant all Christians, far and near,
Holy peace, a glad New Year!
Joy, O Joy, beyond all gladness!
Christ hath done away with sadness!
Hence, all sorrow and repining,
For the Sun of grace is shining!

THURSDAY.

The dayspring from on high hath visited us to give light to them that sit in darkness and in the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the way of peace. – Luke 1:78-79.

And Elisabeth brought forth a son. And she rejoiced greatly, and her neighbors and her cousins rejoiced with her. On the eighth day they came to circumcise the child, and meant to call him Zacharias, after his father. But his mother exclaimed: "Not so; but he shall be called John." They marveled and called his father. Asking for a writing table, he wrote: "His name is John." And straightway his mouth was opened, and, filled with the Holy Ghost, he prophesied and said: "Blessed be the Lord God of Israel; for He hath visited and redeemed His people, and hath raised up a horn of salvation for us in the house of His servant David, as He spake by the mouth of His holy prophets which have been since the world began, that we should be saved from our enemies, and from the hand of all that hate us; to perform the mercy promised to our fathers, and to remember His holy covenant; the oath which He swore to our father Abraham, that He would grant unto us, that we, being delivered out of the hand of our enemies, might serve Him without fear, in holiness and righteousness before Him, all the days of our life." And turning to the babe, he said: "And thou, child, shalt be called the prophet of the Highest; for thou shalt go before the face of the Lord to prepare His ways, to give knowledge of salvation unto

Six months after the events told yesterday, the angel Gabriel was sent from God into a city of Galilee named Nazareth, to a virgin of the house and lineage of David, espoused to a man whose name was Joseph, also of the house of David: and the virgin's name was Mary. And the angel came in unto her and said: "Hail, thou art highly favored; the Lord is with thee: blessed art thou among women." And when she saw him, she was troubled at his saying, and cast in her mind what manner of salutation this should be. And the angel said unto her: "Fear not, Mary; for thou hast found favor with God. *And, behold, thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and bring forth a son, and shalt call His name JESUS.* He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest. And the Lord God shall give unto Him the throne of His father David. And He shall reign over the house of David forever; and of His kingdom there shall be no end."

Then Mary said unto the angel: "How shall this be, seeing I know not a man?" And the angel answered and said unto her: "The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee; therefore also that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God. And, behold, thy cousin Elisabeth, she hath also conceived a son in her old age: and this is the sixth month with her, who was called barren. For with God nothing shall be impossible." And Mary said: "Behold, the handmaid of the Lord; be it unto me according to thy word." And the angel departed from her. (Luke 1:26-38) – Thus was the above prophecy fulfilled. The eternal Son of God had become man in the womb of the Virgin Mary, conceived of the Holy Ghost.

PRAYER. – Lord God, Heavenly Father, I thank You for Your unspeakable grace, that You have regarded us poor sinners, and have sent Your Son into our flesh, and have caused Him to become man for us. I pray You, so to illumine my heart with Your Holy Spirit, that I comfort myself with His incarnation, suffering, and death, and know and accept Him as my Lord and eternal King, and that through Him I may live with You and the Holy Ghost in eternal blessedness. Amen.

Hymn 148, 1-3.

NOW praise we Christ, the Holy One, | The spotless virgin Mary's Son,
Far as the blessed sun doth shine, | E'en to the world's remote confine.

He who Himself all things did make, | A servant's form vouchsafed to take,
That He as man mankind might win, | And save His creatures from their sin.

The grace of God, the mighty Lord, | On the chaste mother was outpoured;
A virgin pure and undefiled | In wondrous wise conceived a child.

WEDNESDAY.

Blessed is she that believed. – Luke 1:45.

In those days, when the angel Gabriel had made the great annunciation to Mary, she arose and went with haste from Nazareth, in Galilee, into that city of Judea where Zacharias and Elisabeth lived. And she entered into the house of Zacharias and saluted Elisabeth. And it came to pass that, when Elisabeth heard the salutation of Mary, the babe leaped in her womb. And Elisabeth was filled with the Holy Ghost; and she spoke out with a loud voice and said: "Blessed art thou among women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb. And whence is this to me that the mother of my Lord should come to me? For, lo, as soon as the voice of thy salutation sounded in mine ears, the babe leaped in my womb for joy. And blessed is she that believed: for there shall be a performance of those things which were told her from the Lord." And Mary, also, was filled with the Holy Ghost, and uttered that beautiful psalm, the "Magnificat," which begins with the words, My soul doth magnify the Lord, and my spirit hath rejoiced in God, my Savior," and which you may read in the Bible. And Mary abode with Elisabeth three months, and returned to her own house. (Luke 1:39-56).

PRAYER. – Behold, O faithful God, the pitiful condition of my heart. Indeed, by Your grace I believe in You, my Savior Jesus

Christ. But my poor sinful heart is so barren, so quick to grasp earthly things, so slow to grasp heavenly things. God, Holy Spirit, You, my only Strength, enliven my faith through Your Word, that the divine fire may burn brightly within me so that I may experience heartfelt joy and gladness in my Savior and great love for Him. Amen.

Hymn 152.

O REJOICE, ye Christians, loudly,
For our joy has now begun;
Wondrous things our God hath done;
Tell abroad His goodness proudly,
Who our race hath honored thus
That He deigns to dwell with us.
Joy, O Joy, beyond all gladness!
Christ hath done away with sadness!
Hence, all sorrow and repining,
For the Sun of grace is shining!

See, my soul, thy Savior chooses
Weakness here and poverty,
In such love He comes to thee,
Nor the hardest couch refuses;
All He suffers for Thy good,
To redeem thee by His blood.
Joy, O Joy, beyond all gladness!
Christ hath done away with sadness!
Hence, all sorrow and repining,
For the Sun of grace is shining!

Lord, how shall I thank Thee rightly!
I acknowledge that by Thee
I am saved eternally,
Let me not forget it lightly,
But to Thee through all things cleave,
And my heart true peace receive.
Joy, O Joy, beyond all gladness!
Christ hath done away with sadness!
Hence, all sorrow and repining,
For the Sun of grace is shining!