



**COLLEGE HEIGHTS
BAPTIST CHURCH**

His Name is Jesus

“I AM”

Daily Scripture Readings for
November 25 - December 29

Yes. Thanksgiving is on Thursday. However, this coming Sunday will be the First Sunday of Advent. Advent is the time we prepare our hearts and minds for Christmas. Advent is the introduction of something important. We are getting ready for the coming of our Savior. His name is Jesus.

This year for Advent, we will continue lighting the candles for joy, love, hope, and peace every Sunday morning. While we do that, we are going to be focusing on the names of Jesus. Our sermons will be looking at the seven “I AM” sayings in the gospel of John. John doesn’t have a traditional Christmas story. John 1 is a type of Christmas story, but not like Matthew and Luke. These “I AM” sayings show us who Jesus is. They connect Jesus to the name God gives himself in Exodus 3:14. Who is this Jesus? Let’s discover together as we prepare for his arrival.

WEEK 1: I AM LIGHT

Monday, November 25, 2019 - John 8:12

The theme of light versus darkness is very prevalent in the book of John. The world is compared to the darkness. Evil lives in the darkness, but those who follow Jesus never need to be scared of the dark. Jesus is the light of the world. God frequently uses light to show us the way. It was a pillar of fire at night that led the Israelites. And it was the star shining in the sky that led the Wise Men to find the baby Jesus. Notice that the star stopped right where Jesus was when the Wise Men arrived in Bethlehem. Psalm 119:105 says “God’s Word is a lamp to my feet, and a light for my path.” John 1:1 “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.” Jesus is the Word. Jesus is the light. The Word is our lamp for our path. When we follow Jesus, his light will lead us exactly where we need to go. Jesus is the light of the world. Follow him.

Tuesday, November 26, 2019 - John 3:19-21

We are always shocked when bad things happen in the daytime. We say things like “and he did that in BROAD DAYLIGHT!” The assumption in society is that evil lurks in the darkness, and it is in darkness that sin occurs. Light reveals the evil occurring in the darkness. Jesus lights our way and shows the love of God who sent his son to light up the darkness. This opportunity we have for Jesus to light our way should bring us joy. Joy will be the candle we light on Sunday. We are living in darkness until Jesus comes into our lives. Joy to the world! The Lord is come! Let earth receive her king! Let there be no more darkness! The Savior has come!

Wednesday, November 27 - Philippians 1:12-18

Do you rejoice no matter who is proclaiming the message of Christ? Too often, we see ourselves in a spirit of competition with other churches and other Christian Denominations. This should not be the case! When a sister church succeeds, we succeed. When one person is saved at a different church, we should all rejoice. No matter who does the proclaiming, no matter the reason the message is being proclaimed, we should rejoice.

Paul was in prison when he wrote the Letter to the Philippians. There were other preachers trying to take advantage of the void Paul left and replace him. These preachers were motivated by selfish ambition. There were also preachers trying to fill the void because they knew the importance of preaching the good news of Christ. Paul says he is not concerned why the message is being proclaimed; he is only concerned that the message is shared with the world.

As we focus on the joy God gives us, let us rejoice and celebrate his name being proclaimed throughout the world. Let us rejoice that his light is shining in the dark places no matter the reason of the person sharing the light. Have joy that Christ is being shared with others.

Thursday, November 28 - Psalm 100

Read this Psalm of Thanksgiving with your family and friends today. I am thankful for all of you. I am thankful for the good God who made us, and I will worship the Lord with gladness. Happy Thanksgiving!

Friday, November 29 - Psalm 98:4-9

What does it mean to you to make a joyful noise? Usually we jokingly talk about making a joyful noise to the Lord when we are not the best singers. But truly look at this passage and see from where the noise is coming. We sing praises with instrument, but then the seas roar, floods clap, hills sing. The whole earth is making a joyful noise to the Lord. Think of the joyful noise of the angels at the birth of Jesus as well. They make a joyful noise by singing and praising God. The light has come into the world and all of creation rejoices. Heaven has come down. The light of the world stepped down into darkness. What an amazing heavenly light! There's no other appropriate response than to make a joyful noise. The earth is rejoicing. Will you join?

Saturday, November 30 - Isaiah 42:1-4

We will conclude our video series on being *Undivided* tomorrow night. I hope it has been a great opportunity to learn and grow in our faith realizing what the Bible means when it says all are equal in the eyes of God. The moment we become undivided is the moment we realize that the "Suffering Servant" found in our passage today is the one who brings justice to all people. I'm very excited to rejoin you tomorrow for Sunday worship. I hope to see you then.

Sunday, December 1 - Luke 1:46-50

Mary is such a great example of a servant. Focus in on verse 49. What great things has God done for you? What has he done for you to proclaim he is holy? Give him your praise today!

WEEK 2 - I AM THE GATE/I AM THE SHEPHERD

Monday, December 2 - John 10:1-18

We will study this passage in detail this Sunday. There are so many fascinating details of these words of Jesus. Jesus is the gate and the shepherd. Being the gate means he is the entry point to the flock. He is the way to be in God's family. He is how you gain citizenship in the Kingdom of God. However you want to describe it, it is Jesus and no one else. As a sheep in the flock, Jesus sacrificed himself for you. But his sacrifice is only salvific if you are safely in the gate and in the pen.

Please do not misread the idea of being confined in the pen after entering the gate. Christianity is not a prison in order to gain protection. It is not confinement. It is freedom. The best life you can live is in the protection of God. As verse 10 says, Jesus came to this earth in order to give us life, not take it away. Live life to the fullest! Seize the day! Enjoy an abundant amazing life. God gave it to you. What are you going to do today to have abundant life because you have entered the gate of salvation?

Tuesday, December 3 - John 15:12-13

Christmas is a great time of celebration. I love every minute of it. It is so much fun, but we must never forget the purpose. This passage reemphasizes the passage we read yesterday about the Good Shepherd. A shepherd will lay down his life for his sheep willingly. The purpose of Christmas is that Jesus was born with a purpose. He was born because it was part of God's perfect plan. He was born in order to be the Good Shepherd who will willingly lay down his life for his friends.

Let's not lose sight of this word "friend." God is not just some distant heavenly being. God is our friend. You are a friend of God. Our relationship is not just a formal, rigid, relationship. It is one of friends. Jesus tells us that in John 15:13. Jesus willingly gave up his place in heaven, was born into a stable, lived in poverty, and died an

excruciating death all because he loved his friends. Praise be to God that I am a friend of God.

Wednesday, December 4 - Genesis 24:61-67

We rejoin our study of Genesis tonight after taking last week off. We come to a transition point in our story and will try to cover several events in Genesis 23:1-25:18. The passage we read today looks at one part of these events: the marriage of Isaac and Rebekah. All of the events in these chapters are intertwined. Rebekah and Isaac marry because Abraham arranges it, so Isaac can be comforted after Sarah's death. This is the type of order of events in our lives too. Each event has an effect on a following events, and we make decisions we may not have made previously. Think about your life and how everything has played together. Pray for God to help you in the future decisions to make. And let's come together tonight to see how the end of Abraham and Sarah's lives affect their sons and future grandsons.

Thursday, December 5 - 1 John 4:16-21

It's hard to fathom the love that God has for us. We've already read this week that Jesus was born in order to "lay down his life for his friends." This is the love that God has for us. It is a love that is perfect. Fear is no more when this love exists. God is love. But we must not stop there and neither does 1 John 4. Because of God's love with us, we must love our brothers and sisters in Christ. This is not a suggestion. This is a command. 1 John 4:20 is quite clear: you do not love God if you do not love other Christians. Jesus loves us so much he is our gate allowing us into God's arms. Jesus loves us so much he is our Good Shepherd and died so we may live. How much do you love others? From who do you need ask forgiveness for not loving them like you should? What sin of exclusion or hatred do you need to confess to God today? "While we were still sinners, Christ died for us" (Romans 5:8). That is how much God loves us. How much do you love others?

Friday, December 6 - Numbers 14:17-20

The people of Israel have disobeyed God...again. God is ready to be done with them. Start over again like he did in the days of Noah. Moses, however, intercedes for the people. Moses reminds God of the love God has for Israel. After this reminder, God relents and forgives the people. This is the lengths of God's love. He is a God of second chances. When the people are punished, the punishment is only to the "third or fourth generations." Exodus 34:6-7 is a longer quote of this passage and it tells us that God's steadfast love goes for a thousand generations!

God's love did not start when Jesus was born. God's love is not only that he sent his son. God's love has been since the beginning when he created us. God has been a loving God who gives second chances since Adam and Eve. I'm so thankful that these are the characteristics of God. Pray a prayer of thanksgiving today that God has given you forgiveness and is a God of love.

Saturday, December 7 - Genesis 25:19-28

We will be moving our Genesis study to Sunday and Wednesday nights for the remainder of this year. We look at Part One of Jacob and Esau tomorrow night. As you read these ten verses, notice what God says about the twins in Rebekah's womb. As you contemplate these words, ask this question: who is responsible for the turmoil and trickery that will occur in this family? Jacob? Rebekah? Or God? Let's discuss tomorrow night.

Sunday, December 8 - Luke 1:51-55

The second half of Mary's Song is continual praise of the help God has provided to her and God's people throughout the generations. All people are equal in the eyes of God: rulers and peasants, rich and poor. Let us all come together to worship the one true God today!

WEEK 3 - I AM THE RESURRECTION AND THE LIFE/I AM THE WAY, TRUTH, AND THE LIFE

Monday, December 9 - John 11:25-27

“Do you believe this?” It’s the question Jesus asks Martha, and it’s the question that could be asked of all of us. Do you believe this? Jesus says he is the resurrection and the life. This is not just a promise for the future, but a promise for today. Yes, it is a promise for the future that when we die a physical death, we will live forever with God in heaven. However, do not miss verse 26. If you recognize Jesus’ power of death in the present, then you realize that you have no fear of death. Those of us who are in Jesus will not die, but in the blink of an eye transfer to heaven. Do you believe this? Then do me a favor. Live like it. Do not live in fear. Do not live in anxiety. Do not allow the things of this world defeat you. We have the resurrection and the life living inside of us. Nothing of this world can defeat us. Do you believe this?

Tuesday, December 10 - John 14:1-7

I get directions every time I go from Cleburne to anywhere in DFW. No, that’s not because I don’t know how to get to where I am going. It’s because I know multiple ways to where I am going. So before I begin my journey, I check the map on my phone. It tells me the quickest way to get to my destination. It tells me how much time a toll road will save me. It tells me if there is an accident on any given road. I can plan my trip and get to where I want to be as quickly as possible. Thank goodness for Google Maps!

Also, thank goodness for Thomas for asking for directions! Because of him, we have the simplest, most concise directions for salvation in the Bible. It couldn’t be more straight-forward. No one can come to God unless they go through Jesus. He is the way. He is the gate. He is also God. He is the Good Shepherd. He is the Truth and

Life. Do you want to know the way? Do you want the directions to a relationship with God? It's through the person of Jesus. There isn't a toll road to pay a little extra. There isn't another way. Jesus is the only way to go.

Wednesday, December 11 - Genesis 29:27-30:24

We will discuss Jacob's family in our study of Genesis tonight. Do you think Jacob got a taste of his own medicine with Laban's trickery? Why does Rachel allow Bilhah to have children for her? How is Jacob's two wives and two maidservants fulfilling God's promise to Abraham to be the father of many descendants more than the stars in the sky? See you tonight!

Thursday, December 12 - Titus 1:2-3

What does Jesus being the way, the truth, and the life do for us? It gives us hope. We have hope of eternal life. Every time we come to a passage on hope, I will remind you of what hope in the Bible is. Hope is not wishful thinking. Hope is grounded in a firm belief and built on a foundation of truth. So when Paul writes to Titus about the "hope of eternal life" there isn't an element of uncertainty. Paul knows that eternal life will come and it has come because of Christ Jesus our Savior.

What do you hope for this Christmas? My hope for all of you is that you are blessed by God. My hope is that God reminds you of the reason we celebrate Christmas. My hope is that your relationship grows with God over these weeks of expecting Christmas. That is my hope for you. What is your hope for yourself?

Friday, December 13 - Ezekiel 37:11-14

What is the feeling when all hope is lost? It feels a lot like Ezekiel 37. I'm just a pile of bones. I'm done. Kaput. Finished. It's over.

A couple months ago, I was running in my neighborhood and in the distance I saw something on the ground. Figuring it was trash or a discarded piece of clothing, I

planned to avoid this unidentified blob by veering to run near it, but not stepping on it. As I got closer, I discovered its true identity: a dead armadillo. Startled, I may have jumped farther away from the dead creature than I initially intended. Flies exploded from the armadillo in a cloudburst-like moment as I passed. The armadillo was certainly dead. It was not coming back to life.

These bones in Ezekiel 37 were past the point of expiration of the armadillo. They had been dead for much longer. The decaying process was much further along. So while I may have come upon the armadillo at first with a thought that it could be sleeping, it was clear to all around that these bones were dry and dead. There was no hope.

However, God shows us in this passage that there is always hope. That God can make the dry, no hope bones alive and well again. God shows us that he is truly the resurrection and the life. I am so glad that God is in the resurrection business. Hope is never lost. Hope is found in the life of Jesus Christ. He can make the dry bones live again.

Saturday, December 14 - Genesis 32:22-31

What's it like to wrestle with God? How does one even wrestle with God? Notice this. It is not until all of Jacob's family and possessions are on the other side of the river that he wrestles with God. It's when we take the time to be alone that God can do great work in our lives. Also notice that it is God who initiates the event it seems. That tells me that God is ready to go to work on your life, you just have to prepare by being alone for a time. In what areas of your life do you need to have a wrestling match with God? Let's dive into that tomorrow night.

Sunday, December 15 - Matthew 1:23

Today is the day of our Choir Musical. They have worked very hard and look forward to presenting this time of worship to you this morning. Come and join us in worshipping Emmanuel, God with us!

WEEK 4 - I AM THE BREAD OF LIFE/I AM THE VINE

Monday, December 16 - John 6:32-40

During the Exodus, God performed a great miracle for the people six days a week. Every morning, a bread-like substance would be provided to the people of Israel. It was called *Manna* because that is the Hebrew for “what is it?” On the day before the Sabbath, God would provide two days worth of *manna*, so the people did not have to work on the Sabbath day.

Jesus is telling the crowd that “I am the bread of life.” When you come to Jesus, you will never spiritually hunger and thirst again. There is no daily excursion to get more *manna*. Jesus is enough. Jesus is the way of salvation. He will fulfill your soul. God sent Jesus into this world to be the bread of life once and for all. Have you partaken? Are you trying to fill yourself with other spiritual food? Only Jesus will fill that God-sized hole in your heart. Pray for others to see that truth today. Pray that they realize that it is Jesus for whom they have been searching.

Tuesday, December 17 - John 15:1-7

Food is the initial connection point of the two “I AM” sayings this week, but it goes much deeper than that. Following the analogy, eating the bread of life is when you put your trust in Jesus and make the decision to follow him (i.e. become a Christian). Jesus being the true vine is our link to God forever. It is the part of salvation where we are saved every day.

Christians will be known by their fruit. The branches that are producing fruit are truly connected to the vine. The branches (i.e. people) who produce no fruit are not connected. What this is saying is that those who rely on family lineage to be part of the vine are thrown away. Simply put, if your actions don't indicate that you are Christian, it is time to reflect and consider if you do trust Jesus as your Lord (boss) and Savior. Are you connected to the vine or not? Bearing fruit should never end. Psalm 92:14 says "in old age they still produce fruit; they are always green and full of sap." The writer of this Psalm is discussing the righteous people. Are you producing fruit? Are you connected to the True Vine?

Wednesday, December 18 - 2 Thessalonians 3:16

We sing about it in *Silent Night*. We talk about it throughout the year. We yearn for it. But what is "heavenly peace?" I think Paul's description in 2 Thess. 3:16 comes close to explaining heavenly peace. It is peace that God gives at all times in all ways. God has given us the opportunity to have peace through his son Jesus. Have you partaken in the sustenance provided by the bread of life? Are you connected to the vine? Do you want heavenly peace? Do you want peace at all times in all ways? This is the way to do it. Don't be ashamed to share this message with the people around you today. It is a week before Christmas. There are many who are not feeling peace right now. They are very stressed. Share with them the heavenly peace that you have found in Christ. Tell them today. And then come to church tonight so we can carol and bring heavenly peace in that way as well.

Thursday, December 19 - Colossians 1:20

From the time sin was on the earth starting in the Garden of Eden, creation and God's relationship had been disharmonious. Where there is disharmony, there is no peace. God needed to make a way to bring creation back to himself. God needed to

bring us back into harmony with him. God did this by making peace through the death of Jesus on the cross.

Our verse today ends a passage that might have been an early church hymn. Colossians 1:15-20 is not the normal writing style of Paul, so it is thought that he is quoting a hymn that the early church sang in these verses. I always find it interesting to learn about how the early church worshipped. This is a hymn devoted to Christ and what he did in heaven and on earth. Ultimately what Jesus was able to do is bring peace to a world that knew no peace. Do you need peace in your life? God is truly the only one who can help. Pray for him to provide you peace today.

Friday, December 20 - Isaiah 9:6-7

“Endless peace.” That’s what it says we will have when this child mentioned in Isaiah 9:6 sits on his throne. “Endless peace.” My feeble brain cannot comprehend the word “endless.” This past Father’s Day, my kids got me a coupon book. There are several fun coupons like a car wash, garage cleaning, or winning an argument. One coupon though is “peace and quiet.” When I redeem this coupon, I am entitled to peace and quiet for up to 4 hours. There is no arguing, screaming, or anything of the sort. I haven’t used it yet, mostly because I don’t think my kids can physically be calm for that long. Four hours is a long time for there to be peace at my house.

What can Jesus bring you? “Endless Peace.” Do you know one of the ways he can bring you this peace? Look up to verse six. “Authority rests upon his shoulders.” The people who are in authority are the ones who make all of the decisions. They are the people who have the stress of weighing each choice and consequence. That is not our job. Our job is to obey the one who is in authority. When we allow God to make the decisions for us in life, not only will they be better decisions than the ones we make, but it gives us peace. It alleviates the stress of having to make a decision on our own. Let God have his proper authority and it will give you “endless peace.”

Saturday, December 21 - Genesis 33:1-4; 36:6-8

We conclude the Jacob and Esau story tomorrow night. What this story shows us is reconciliation is always possible no matter how long the conflict has been brewing. For Jacob and Esau, it was easily decades that they had been apart. The brothers are able to reunite after this time and forgive each other. Who do you need to forgive? We will take the Lord's Supper tomorrow morning. To prepare to come to the table, reach out to someone today to prompt reconciliation and forgiveness in your relationship.

WEEK 5 - HE'S HERE!

Sunday, December 22 - Luke 2:1-7

It is the beginning of the Christmas week. We shall take the next three days to read the Luke Christmas story, then follow that up with the Matthew Christmas story. We immediately see that Jesus' birth is going to be in conflict with earthly government. A census is being taken. The Roman Empire wants to know how many men there are to go to battle. It wants to know how much taxes they can charge. The world has not stopped in order for the Savior to be born. Jesus is born amidst the hustle and bustle of a chaotic world, a world that you might think is very similar to today. Don't miss the glory of Christmas because "real life" is busy. Stop. The Savior has come. Let us rejoice!

Monday, December 23 - Luke 2:9-14

I like to think of this portion of the Christmas story as Jesus' birth announcement. Whenever a child is born, many families will send out a birth announcement to tell family and friends about the new addition to the family. All of the important information like weight, length, and birthdate are on the announcement with adorable pictures of the baby and family.

When we read about the angels announcing the birth of Jesus, they also proclaim the important information about the baby boy. He is a Savior, the Messiah

(Christ), the Lord. What do people need to know about Jesus? Exactly this. Jesus is the Savior, the one who can save us from sin. Jesus is the Messiah, the Christ, the Anointed One who God has ordained and has been with God since before the beginning of the world. Jesus is the Lord, the master, the boss of your life. The angels are excited about his arrival. They are excited to welcome their Savior, Messiah, and Lord. Have you made the decision to have Jesus be your Savior? Do you believe he is the Messiah? Do you make the decision daily for him to be your Lord? I hope so. Thank you God for sending us your son. Let us accept him as Savior, Messiah, and Lord.

Tuesday, December 24 - Luke 2:15-20

Do you ever find it inconvenient to worship God? Is it ever not a good time? When the angels tell the shepherds the good news about Jesus being born, it is not a good time. It will be very inconvenient for the shepherds to go and worship Jesus in Bethlehem. So what do they do? Do they give excuses? Do they say they will go after work? Do they say “we don’t have to go to Bethlehem, we can worship Jesus while we are in the fields?” No. They go and worship the baby Jesus.

One of two things happened when the shepherds went. They either took the sheep with them or left the sheep to fend for themselves in the field. The first option would have been difficult. The second option would have gotten them fired from their job. I believe they were good shepherds who wanted to go and worship the Good Shepherd. I think they took the sheep with them to crowded, “no room at the inn” Bethlehem.

Remember what it is like to corral your children in a crowded store? Remember the feeling of terror of losing sight of your child? That was the anxiety the shepherds would face by going to Jesus. It would have been so much easier just staying in the field. This is the choice we have this Christmas Eve. Do we do what is easy or do we take the time amidst the stress and anxiety of getting ready for Christmas to worship

Jesus? It's ironic that "getting ready" for Christmas, might preclude us from worshipping the one Christmas is about. I hope you plan to come to worship tonight at 6:00 p.m. I imagine there are 100 different things that need your attention today. Even so, come and worship the Savior. You will be blessed and you will return to your homes like the shepherds: glorifying and praising God.

Wednesday, December 25 - Matthew 2:1-12

MERRY CHRISTMAS!!! May your day be filled with celebration of the birth of the Lord Jesus Christ. May God bless you and your family on this special day.

Thursday, December 26 - Matthew 2:13-15

The Christmas story is not only one of celebration and excitement. What happened was that Jesus' arrival upset powerful people. "Who is this baby who these Wise Men came to worship?" King Herod is wondering. "Who is this one they called the king of the Jews? There is no other king besides me!" The politics and ministry of Jesus will always be contrary to power and prestige. Jesus tells us later in his ministry that "no one can serve two masters." And while it hadn't been said yet, King Herod understands this and wants to be the master, leader, king of this area. He has power and authority, and he is not about to give that up to a baby.

God made sure to protect his child. He warns Joseph, Jesus' earthly adopted father, to take Mary and Jesus to Egypt. This family seeks refuge from infanticide in Egypt. God uses Egypt, a place of slavery for Israel in Exodus, as a place of rescue for Jesus, the current hope for Israel and all tribes and nations.

Herod wanted to take away our choice of serving God or serving man, wealth, society, power. God intervened to give us the choice. What choice have you been making? Is it a choice to make Jesus Lord of your life? Or is it a choice to make earthly powers the master of your life? God wants you to choose him daily, but he will not force you. What choice will you make today?

Friday, December 27 - Matthew 2:19-23; Luke 2:39-40

Don't leave Jesus in the manger. Over the course of the next few weeks, we will all take down our Christmas decorations. When we remove the nativity scenes from their place of prominence in our homes, we will package up a baby Jesus and put him in the closet until next Christmas. This should not be what you do in your daily life. It seems that we don't remember that Jesus doesn't remain a baby, but he grows up. You might be saying that I'm completely off track and of course we know he grows up. But let's be honest. Do we act like he grew up, gave us several radical commands, and follow them, or do we marvel at a beautiful baby and don't recognize the expectations he has for us?

Baby Jesus is cute and unassuming. Baby Jesus can't speak and tell us to "love our neighbor as yourself." A baby lets us decide when to come near him. An adult Jesus can follow us and light up those dark places in our lives we don't want light to shine. Baby Jesus just lays there in hay. Adult Jesus tells us that "whatever you do for the least of these, you do it for me." It's way easier to follow baby Jesus who doesn't ask anything of you instead of the true Jesus who demands your life, your soul, your all. Jesus grows up. Jesus wants you to serve the poor and needy. Jesus wants you to be a peacemaker in a war-mongering world. Jesus wants you to take up your cross daily. Celebrating the birth of Jesus is awesome. Remember, however, who that baby grows to be and what he requires of you.

Saturday, December 28 - Genesis 37:1-11

We will start the last part of our study of Genesis tomorrow night turning our focus to Joseph. We will look at the transition of the family from Jacob being the focal point to that dreamer Joseph. There will be lots of storylines to tie up and begin, so I hope you plan to be here! I'll leave you with this thought. If you told your brothers and sisters that you had a dream that you would rule over them and they would bow to you, how would they react?

Sunday, December 29 - Psalm 26:1-3

With Christmas in the rear view mirror, we come back to Psalms to prepare us for Sunday worship. Let us be able to say confidently, like the psalmist, that we walk in faithfulness to God!