

INBREAKING

THE KINGDOM COME AT CHRISTMAS

vineyard[®]

“The light shines
in the darkness, and
the darkness has not
overcome it.”

John 1:4b

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Introduction

The entire Bible is about the epic history, the world-shaping saga, of God's redemptive purpose for humankind.

In John 1:1-4a, we read these powerful words:

“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning.

Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made.

In him was life, and that life was the light of all mankind....”

When God Breaks In

Advent (noun): *The arrival, appearance, emergence of a notable person, thing, or event.*

Inbreaking (noun): *A breaking in, an inroad, invasion, or incursion.*

The approach of Christmas, for many followers of Jesus worldwide, is known as the season of *Advent*.

It is a time of anticipating the “arrival of a *notable person, thing, or event.*”

In the Christmas story, we find all three definitions of Advent happening at one time:

1) the arrival of Jesus (*a notable person*),

2) the activities surrounding His birth (*a notable event*), and lastly –

3) the inbreaking of the Kingdom of God.

At the birth of Jesus, an inroad occurred into the human plight.

Hear again the words of John 1:4 – “*...In him (Jesus) was life, and that life was the light of all mankind. The light shines in the darkness and the darkness has not overcome it.*”

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In other words, light *breaks into* darkness – and the darkness *cannot* overcome it.

Advent is the story of the process, the *way*, that God chose to break in to the fearful, stubborn, resistant, desperate story of humanity.

And *how* God does something is as important as *what* He does.

An Inbreaking In Recent History

When the Allied Forces in WWII needed to break through enemy lines on the beach of Normandy, France, they had a *strategy*.

Facing them on that beach was a steeled and entrenched resistance force, hardened by battle and resolved to vanquish anyone landing on the soil.

Here is the fascinating story of what we now know as D-Day (a military term simply denoting the key day that a large-scale assault will occur):

“During World War II (1939-1945), the Battle of Normandy, which lasted from June 1944 to August 1944, resulted in the Allied liberation of Western Europe from Nazi Germany’s control. Codenamed Operation Overlord, the battle began on June 6, 1944, also known as D-Day, when some 156,000 American, British, and Canadian forces landed on five beaches along a 50-mile stretch of the heavily fortified coast of France’s Normandy region.

The invasion was one of the largest amphibious military assaults in history and required extensive planning. Prior to D-Day, the Allies conducted a large-scale deception campaign designed to mislead the Germans about the intended invasion target.

By late August 1944, all of northern France had been liberated, and by the following spring the Allies had defeated the Germans. The Normandy landings have been called the beginning of the end of war in Europe” (section from History.com).

How Inbreakings Work

While a military analogy may not be as in vogue today as it may have been in previous years, it remains a powerful metaphor for how a sacred incursion into the human heart occurred over 2000 years ago in Bethlehem – at Christmas.

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How do inbreakings occur?

1. First, there is a complex and well- prepared strategy.

A strategy is a plan, a pre- determined, well-thought out, goal- oriented, and visionary process by which a desired breakthrough will be achieved.

2. Secondly, there is a defined battlefield.

The battlefield is the place where all the activities of the challenge will play out. Its terrain will determine the strategy; if it's a land battle, boats are useless. If it's a sea battle, one should leave the tanks at home. If it's a battle for the heart? Then *love* will have to lead it.

3. Thirdly, there is a moment of head-on engagement.

When the resistance is high, and diplomacy has failed, something needs to *give*. And as we see in the biblical story of the Advent of Jesus at Christmas, it was God who *gave* (John 3:16) to engage the world in love – with the goal of freedom in clear view.

The Inbreaking God At Christmas

In the Bible, we watch God the Father's strategy unfold for breaking through to the resistant, stubborn, and entrenched human heart.

It may surprise us to know that Jesus, whom we often speak about in terms of love, goodness, and kindness – was also bent on *destruction*! But what did Jesus come to destroy? What was His battlefield, His point of inbreaking?

*“The reason the Son of God appeared was to **destroy** the devil's work“ (1 John 8:8b).*

The Day God Broke Through

INBREAKING is about the way God *made His advance* – confronting darkness and shining light into the heart of the world He loves. **Bless you as we enter into the story of God's inbreaking at Christmas.**

Inbreaking: The Power Of Hope

FIRST SUNDAY OF ADVENT

Our Advent Story

Elizabeth's greeting of Mary illustrates the delight of the expectant heart in Christ's appearing.

Scripture

In a loud voice she (Elizabeth) exclaimed: "Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the child you will bear! But why am I so favored, that the mother of my Lord should come to me? As soon as the sound of your greeting reached my ears, the baby in my womb leaped for joy. Blessed is she who has believed that the Lord would fulfill his promises to her!" (Luke 1:42-45).

Devotional

Expectation is the soil that feeds the root of hope – and if anyone in the Bible had hope, it was Mary – and her older cousin, Elizabeth.

Rehearsing The Goodness Of God

We're never far from hope; it simply eludes us because we forget how good God has been to us.

And forgetting happens because we have lost our habit of rehearsing the goodness of God.

Today, gratitude is making a big comeback. One only needs to turn on the television to hear stars and celebrities talking about how they are learning to be grateful. (To whom or to what is always the question!)

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They are learning the truth of what the Bible has taught us for millennia, that we are to “*...Be filled with the Spirit, speaking to one another with psalms, hymns, and songs from the Spirit. Sing and make music from your heart to the Lord, always giving thanks to God the Father for everything, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ*” (Eph. 5:18-20).

Gratefulness is the antidote for the toxic waste ungratefulness pumps into our hearts and minds on a daily basis. I.e. Our bad habits really can kill us.

Gratefulness leads to hope, while ungratefulness leads to despair. The spiritual equation will always prove true.

Elizabeth must have had some good habits to bring to her shining moment in the Christmas story.

Quick To Hope

Elizabeth, it seemed, had developed habits of the heart that made her *quick to hope*. Unlike other aged women who were childless, and even looked down upon by the society of her time, Elizabeth had become what she had practiced all of the years before – a *Woman of Hope*. And God knew that she would be the perfect choice to become Mary’s confidant and friend.

Whether she learned her habits of hope in her family growing up, or through lessons learned along her journey, we hear the ringing bell of hope each time we meet Elizabeth in the Bible.

Luke 1 tells us that Elizabeth, the mother of John the Baptist and the wife of Zechariah the priest, was a descendant of Aaron just like her husband. “Both of them were righteous in the sight of God, observing all the Lord’s commands and decrees blamelessly.” Luke 1:6 tells us this, noting that this couple related well with God and with others.

But Elizabeth, now old in years, was lacking one thing that was, both to her and the culture of her time, the most precious gift she could receive from God – *a child*.

This righteous woman had been practicing gratefulness and hopefulness *her entire life, though childless*. In persevering, she becomes both a sign and a wonder, showing that even a heart longing for an unfulfilled desire can be settled in her heart toward God.

And then, her hope pays off. She becomes pregnant in her old age, like Sarah, the wife of Abraham in the Old Testament. Elizabeth declares, “*The Lord has done this for me..., in these days he has shown his favor and taken away my disgrace among the people*” (Luke 1:25).

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Elizabeth rehearsed the goodness of God – and hope was the result.

Now, with a lifetime of hopefulness in her spirit, and a budding miracle in her body, Elizabeth becomes an unstoppable force.

Elizabeth is speaking to all of us when she says, *“Blessed is she (or he) who has believed that the Lord would fulfill his promises to her!”*

Act On This Devotional

Ask God to break into your own attitudes that feed the “bitter complaint” within. Welcome the Holy Spirit to train you in gratefulness no matter your circumstance. It is the seedbed of Kingdom hope.

Want to go further? Get a journal, or a private diary of some sort, and write down your reflections once a week after reading each devotional.

Inbreaking: The Power Of Peace

SECOND SUNDAY OF ADVENT

Our Advent Story

The Angels herald the inbreaking, with a word of “peace” coming to humankind. What kind of peace does God bring in a troubled world?

Scripture

Suddenly a great company of the heavenly host appeared with the angel, praising God and saying, “Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace to those on whom his favor rests” (Luke 2:13-14).

Devotional

When the angels burst onto the scene declaring that Christmas *peace* had come, what kind of peace were they talking about?

Two stories from the Gospel of Luke illustrate what the angels already knew – that the Prince of Peace had power to speak into the most turbulent situations to bring the calm of God to the moment.

For you and I, who daily find ourselves more impressed with our troubles than with the capabilities of Christ, this is truly *good news*.

Story 1: Jesus Calms The Storm

One day Jesus said to his disciples, “Let us go over to the other side of the lake.” So they got into a boat and set out. As they sailed, he fell asleep. A squall came down on the lake, so that the boat was being swamped, and they were in great danger. The disciples went and woke him, saying, “Master, Master, we’re going to drown!”

He got up and rebuked the wind and the raging waters; the storm subsided, and all was calm (Luke 8:22-24).

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In this famous story, Jesus shows that no storm is too big for His peace to break in with calming, quieting power. The Hebrew word for peace, *shalom*, speaks of peace that breaks in where fear is holding court. It is the presence of Peace Himself, lifting fear from the shoulders of those carrying its burden, that is a mark of the Kingdom.

Story 2: Jesus Delivers The Demonized Man

When Jesus stepped ashore, he was met by a demon-possessed man from the town. For a long time this man had not worn clothes or lived in a house, but had lived in the tombs. When he saw Jesus, he cried out and fell at his feet, shouting at the top of his voice, "What do you want with me, Jesus, Son of the Most High God? I beg you, don't torture me!" For Jesus had commanded the impure spirit to come out of the man. Many times it had seized him, and though he was chained hand and foot and kept under guard, he had broken his chains and had been driven by the demon into solitary places.

The inbreaking Kingdom brings deliverance where fear has held court.

Jesus asked him, "What is your name?" "Legion," he replied, because many demons had gone into him. And they begged Jesus repeatedly not to order them to go into the Abyss.

A large herd of pigs was feeding there on the hillside. The demons begged Jesus to let them go into the pigs, and he gave them permission. When the demons came out of the man, they went into the pigs, and the herd rushed down the steep bank into the lake and was drowned.

When those tending the pigs saw what had happened, they ran off and reported this in the town and countryside, and the people went out to see what had happened. When they came to Jesus, they found the man from whom the demons had gone out, sitting at Jesus' feet, dressed and in his right mind; and they were afraid (Luke 8:27-35).

In this story, Jesus, the inbreaking Lord, speaks a word of deliverance to a man whose soul has been tortured most of his life. The Kingdom comes in power in this moment because the demons overplay their hand. Sometimes what the devil is doing is so over-the-top and evident that almost anyone can see that the powers that are at work in someone's life are beyond their control.

The point of the story is not, sadly, what happens to the pigs. It is found in the moment we see the man sitting, in his right mind, at the feet of Jesus. He is *free from being controlled* within – and the resulting peace will follow him the rest of his life.

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Peace follows the presence of the Master, and when He comes – we are brought back to our right mind.

Act On This Devotional

While both of these stories may feel like they are a world away from our daily experience (how often have you been in a small boat in a storm, or demonized living among tombs?), they truly are not. In the first, fear is holding court, and Jesus brings Kingdom peace when we cry out to Him. In the second, demonization is an image of us being controlled by inner forces that lead us astray.

In both these situations in your own life, practice yielding to Jesus by crying out for help, and by welcoming Him to take control again.

Inbreaking: The Power Of Joy

THIRD SUNDAY OF ADVENT

Our Advent Story

What did the Shepherds hope for when the Angel spoke about “great joy?”

Scripture

But the angel said to them, “Do not be afraid. I bring you good news that will cause great joy for all the people” (Luke 2:10).

Devotional

The angels in the Christmas sky had a few messages for the gawking shepherds, and one of the most enduring and exhilarating messages is that *joy* is about to make an appearance!

Have you ever experienced Kingdom joy? It’s that moment when God does something so profound you can only laugh and delight in what has happened.

A Baby Leaps For Joy

Elizabeth, whom we spoke of earlier, experienced this mark of the Kingdom when she met up with her cousin Mary and encountered Jesus (who was in the womb!) for the first time.

As soon as the sound of your greeting reached my ears, the baby in my womb leaped for joy (Luke 1:44).

John the Baptist, before either he or his Lord are out of the womb, is ecstatic! He knows what is coming, and He knows the world will never be the same.

When the Kingdom comes, scholar Derek Morphew says, there is always the sign of *joy*. Joy is the free delight, the great pleasure and happiness, that can only roll in when Jesus comes on the scene.

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Susan's Story

A woman named Susan spent most of her life plagued by fear and depression. She was a young mother of two beautiful children, and the wife of a caring man, but she continually felt disillusioned with herself and the person she saw herself to be.

Always searching, she could never quite find the remedy for her soul sickness. Then, one day, with her small group's hands laid on her, praying for her to see herself as the Father saw her, something happened.

Susan burst into laughter! It started with a small giggle (she tried to control it, as it's embarrassing to laugh when others are praying for you), but the more she tried, the more joy began to bubble to the surface! Before the small group meeting was done, Susan had laughed to the point of tears – and so had all those in her small group!

What happened in that time of prayer? Talking about the experience later, Susan shared what was going on inside her. As her group was praying for her, she began to see a picture unfold in her mind's eye. She saw herself as a trapped little girl in a corner, wishing someone would notice her.

That sad picture was then immediately replaced by another picture filling her imagination. She was in a field, spinning and whirling about, held by the hands of Jesus!

Joy As A Sign Of The Kingdom

For where two or three gather in my name, there am I with them (Matt. 18:20), the Scriptures say. And, in that living room in the middle of a small town, Jesus was *with* both them and a daughter He loved.

Susan experienced unrestrainable joy, and a picture that changed her view of herself and Jesus' love forever.

The angels knew Jesus' coming would be good news. John the Baptist knew it would be good news.

Now, Susan and her small group knew it was good news, too!

The Joy Set Before Us

A verse in Hebrews gives us some understanding as to why it is so important that Christians experience the joy of Jesus regularly.

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...Fixing our eyes on Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of faith. For the joy set before him he endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God (Heb. 12:2).

Joy is a sign that the Kingdom is here, and the Kingdom is now.

Joy is a goal that can keep us walking through the most soul-wearing times of our lives. We can't stop hard times from coming, but we can keep our eyes on the prize rather than constantly staring at our debilitating circumstances. The gift of the Holy Spirit to us is that the Spirit makes Jesus' presence real.

And the reality of Jesus' presence is always ushered in with joy.

Act On This Devotional

Welcome the Holy Spirit to bring you Jesus' joy. Like Susan, say that you're ready to trade in your old way of talking about your life for a new script – a new image of how God sees your situation.

Inbreaking: The Power Of Love

FOURTH SUNDAY OF ADVENT

Our Advent Story

Mary is the personification of one loved by God, who loves back with the same passion.

Scripture

But the angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary; you have found favor with God. You will conceive and give birth to a son, and you are to call him 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 Jacob's descendants forever; his kingdom will never end" (Luke 1:30- 33).

Devotional

There is something very special about Mary, the young girl who was chosen by God to carry His Son into the world.

Mary (and her deep love for her heavenly Father and her soon-to- be-born Son) has been the subject of songs, carols, poems, and novels. Cathedrals and churches have been named after her, and some of the most famous sculptures and paintings in the world seek to capture the likeness of this tender young woman of faith. But was Mary the sweet young maiden we so often talk about at Christmas?

Small Yet Mighty

Have you ever met someone who was small in stature, but large in force of character?

Some say that Mother Theresa was that way, and others say the Queen Mother has a similar bearing.

But Mary? Sweet little Mary of the Bible story we tell at Christmas?

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I think we can say, with some confidence, that Mary was more than meets the eye (at least the eye with which we read the Bible).

In Luke 1:46-55, Mary sings a song after the angel gives her the news that she will become what the Orthodox Church calls the *theotokos*, or *God-bearer*.

My soul glorifies the Lord and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior, for he has been mindful of the humble state of his servant.

From now on all generations will call me blessed, for the Mighty One has done great things for me – holy is his name.

His mercy extends to those who fear him, from generation to generation.

He has performed mighty deeds with his arm; he has scattered those who are proud in their inmost thoughts.

He has brought down rulers from their thrones but has lifted up the humble. He has filled the hungry with good things but has sent the rich away empty.

He has helped his servant Israel, remembering to be merciful to Abraham and his descendants forever, just as he promised our ancestors.

By the time the angel speaks, Mary is ready to say “Yes!” to whatever crazy idea God has in mind.

Can you imagine this blessed, yet fierce young woman declaring, “*He has performed mighty deeds with his arm; he has scattered those who are proud in their inmost thoughts. He has brought down rulers from their thrones...?*”

Mary has been expecting the Kingdom, praying for the Kingdom, talking about the Kingdom for her entire life before this moment!

By the time the angel speaks, Mary is simply ready to say “Yes!” to whatever crazy idea God has in mind.

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Start Afraid, Finish Fearless

Mary seems to have been afraid, if only for a moment, of what strange sightings the coming Kingdom brings with it. Seeing an angel is no normal occurrence for any of us!

But any fear that she had in that startling moment of seeing the angel gave way to *fearlessness* once she heard – and resonated with – the message she heard.

Fear never disqualifies anyone from an experience of the inbreaking Kingdom!

It's how we respond to that fear that takes us deeper into God, or deeper into our isolation from God.

Mary made the right choice, and we can make that same kind of choice this Christmas season.

Love Makes Us Do Crazy Things

There can be no doubt about it. Mary had experienced the Father's love in her life, and it enabled her to say yes to His plan to surprise the world with His coming in Christ.

Jesus could go through all that He did because, in his baptismal waters, He experienced the love of the Father in a way that gave Him the heart to walk the long road to the cross.

You and I, experiencing God's love, then dispersing it to the world in acts of kindness, faith, hope, and the ministry of the Holy Spirit, are as equipped as Mary was to bring the Kingdom right where we are.

Act On This Devotional

Ask your heavenly Father for a renewed experience of His love for you, breaking in on the sad stories you may tell yourself.

God loves you! He won't let you go! He may allow you to be embarrassed, like Mary was as an unwed mother, but you will never embarrass Him!

Say "Yes!" to whatever He has in store.

The Kingdom Come At Christmas

CHRISTMAS DAY

Our Christmas Story

Drawing on the prophecies of the ancient Hebrews, the “Kingdom Come” is in full focus.

Scripture

When Jesus spoke again to the people, he said, “I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life” (Jn. 8:12).

Devotional

It’s Christmas Day! The inbreaking Kingdom of God is in full swing as we celebrate the birth of Jesus – God’s chosen King for all of time.

And what does King Jesus do when He comes?

He heals.

He delivers.

He sets captives free.

He puts the lonely in families.

He provides for the poor and the vulnerable.

He uses His Church to model loving community.

He takes broken hearts and makes them whole.

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Jesus Is God's Inbreaking King

Christmas is D-Day for the human family; it is the day God entered our pain to heal it from the inside out.

Jesus, *Emmanuel* (meaning *God with us*) shows us that God is not only real, but that God is interested in intervening in your circumstances and mine.

Jesus shows us that there is a Father in heaven who not only loves you, but is intent on making you into the kind of person who experiences hope, peace, joy, and love.

That process begins as it did for Mary, Joseph, the shepherds, the wise men, Elizabeth, Zechariah – and everyone else who features in the Christmas story.

It begins with a simple “Yes” to all that God has for you; a “Yes” to all that God wants to do through you.

Bodies have been healed, because someone said “Yes.”

Minds weighed down with depression have been set free because someone said, “Yes.”

And Christmas Day is the perfect day to learn to pray the prayer that has been important to so many people across the world who are a part of the Vineyard family of churches:

“Come, Holy Spirit.

Have your way in me. Like Mary, like Joseph, like every person who has ever welcomed You to break into their lives to do whatever You want, I say ‘Yes’ to anything in Your plan.”

Isaiah Points To The Inbreaking

Isaiah 9, one of the most beautiful prophecies we have foretelling the birth of Christ, speaks of the light that will break into the darkness of the human heart.

Nevertheless, there will be no more gloom for those who were in distress.

In the past he humbled the land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali, but in the future he will honor Galilee of the nations, by the Way of the Sea, beyond the Jordan –

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The people walking in darkness have seen a great light; on those living in the land of deep darkness a light has dawned (Isaiah 9:1-2).

Maybe the darkness has threatened to overtake you; to make you a servant of your fear or anger.

This is the *inbreaking message*, heralded by angels and sung by fellow believers across history:

Hallelujah! The Lord God Almighty reigns (*Rev. 19:6*)! He has shined the great light of His Son on those walking in lands of deep darkness (*Isaiah 9:12*). No more are we under the control of the devil who comes to cloud our thoughts, steal our joy, and silence our voice (*John 10:10*). Jesus has come to destroy the works of the devil (*1 John 3:8*), and to restore you to His hope, His joy, His peace, and His love. There is no one, and nothing, that can separate you from that love (*Rom. 8:38-39*), so stand, sing the carols of the season, and do it with boldness knowing that you are singing the story of God's intervention on behalf of your soul and mine. He will *never* leave you or forsake you (*Heb. 13:5*).

There is no sin He can't forgive, no pain He cannot heal, no chain He cannot break.

Acknowledge Him in all your ways, and He will make your path straight (*Prov. 3:6*).

Act On This Devotional

On this Christmas Day, celebrate the inbreaking love of Jesus and the promise it holds for a world gone crazy.

There is no sin for which we can't be forgiven, no pain He cannot heal, no chain He cannot break.

And as you celebrate this season, remember that Jesus is inviting you to be a part of His inbreaking Kingdom work in the world. He wants to bring His Kingdom – through you.

Beyond Christmas

A Word For The New Year

NEW YEAR'S DAY

Our New Year Questions

How does the inbreaking Kingdom affect the year ahead? What hopes should you allow to fill your heart, knowing challenges are before you?

Scripture

But we have this treasure in jars of clay to show that this all-surpassing power is from God and not from us. We are hard pressed on every side, but not crushed; perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not abandoned; struck down, but not destroyed.

Therefore we do not lose heart. Though outwardly we are wasting away, yet inwardly we are being renewed day by day. For our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all. So we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen, since what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal (2 Cor. 4:7-9; 16-18).

Devotional

What do you think the year ahead will hold for you? Think back over the past year, and all the things that happened that you didn't expect.

Odds are, some of those things were treasures; gifts from God worth you stopping your reading right now to offer Him thanks!

Other surprises, however, were not so welcome. You may have felt the sting of suffering, and suffering can leave us feeling isolated, lonely, and sure that those who love us are, at the very least, unavailable.

It is into this kind of year ahead that Christ is already planning to *invade*.

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Ready For Anything

Many people spend more time getting ready for their work day than they do getting ready for the New Year.

Clothing and food and hygiene supplies cover and feed and clean our bodies.

But what prepares the soul for a year that will surely hold both beautiful surprises from God, and some measure of suffering?

Your Life As A Jar

Paul, in writing 2 Corinthians, had something to say about this. In our passage for today, the Apostle was clear about our starting place – we are *humble jars of clay*.

And how does knowing that prepare us for anything that might come our way in the New Year?

Simply put, when we acknowledge that we are a humble container of Christ's glorious presence, then we are ready to be useful to the God who loves to use the most ordinary people to accomplish His extraordinary purposes.

Those who are looking for God to break in, see Him break in.

God can fill us, and pour us out, as He desires. We are committed to seeing God's inbreaking Kingdom turn the tables on the devil's schemes, rather than being committed only to our own happiness. We are committed to seeing Christ formed in us through any suffering that comes our way, rather than being committed to securing a pain-free life.

Therefore we do not lose heart. Though outwardly we are wasting away, yet inwardly we are being renewed day by day.

For our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all.

So we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen, since what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal (2 Cor. 4:16-18).

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D-Day For Planet Earth

The Christmas story is a drama that reveals this truth – that those who are *looking* for God to break in, get to see Him break in.

Across salvation history, the most humble clay pots of men and women and children, all who were ready to participate with God in His intervention, His great D-Day for planet earth, experienced His presence in remarkable ways over their lifetimes.

Welcome The Inbreaking Kingdom

We can actually tune our lives to be receptive, ready, and aware of God's activity around us in the same way.

We can have eyes that are looking to see what the Father is doing, and then hearts that are willing to join Him to see captives set free and the wounded healed.

Just like D-Day in Normandy all those years ago, God's victory is at hand – because His strategy was, and always will be, Jesus. Jesus is the inbreaking God, and He's coming for you!

Act On This Devotional

Take a few moments to sit down with a journal, and write down 10 ways you would like to see Jesus break through in your life this next year.

After you've written each item down, make each one a prayer and talk to God about your hopes for the year. As He shines light on each of your requests, make notes you can return to at the end of next year.

Why Celebrate Advent and Christmas?

“It’s the most wonderful time of the year...” ring the words of an old Christmas song. But why? Why does celebrating Christmas, and the season of Advent that leads up to it, matter?

In the early centuries of the Church, it became clear that the rhythms of time – days, weeks, years, and lifetimes – could be used to **help Christians remember and reclaim the saving events of Jesus’ life**. Jesus’ birth (the Incarnation), and Jesus’ triumph over death (the Resurrection), were the two obvious themes that would shape the year.

By repeating certain cycles each year based around these two themes, Christians could begin to **orient their entire lives** around remembering, reclaiming, and retelling what God has done for us through Jesus Christ. This was called the “Christian Year,” or for our purposes, the **Worship Year**.

Two cycles take us through the year and enable us to order our lives around a Christ-centered spirituality. The **Cycle Of Light** includes Advent (*anticipation*), Christmas (*celebration*), and Epiphany (*proclamation*). The **Cycle Of Life** includes Lent (*anticipation*), Easter (*celebration*), and Pentecost/After Pentecost (*proclamation*).

Advent is the official beginning of the Worship Year, and is a season of hope, of expectation, and of waiting. In Advent we remember the longing for deliverance from evil and oppression experienced by the ancient Jews, and the anticipation of God’s Kingdom breaking in on their behalf.

Like a child who loves to have a story read over and over again, we reclaim the powerful saving events of **Christmas** by *retelling them* – the Story of God’s love breaking into our reality in Jesus.

Have you ever considered reading the Christmas story aloud with family or friends on Christmas Eve or Christmas Day?

INBREAKING

THE KINGDOM COME AT CHRISTMAS

On the following page are the Christmas passages you can read, in order.

The Vineyard Movement, since birth, has valued seeing individual Christians experience God in their daily lives. Through spiritual practices such as worship, fellowship, mission, the reading and application of Scripture, soul care, family care, healing of the broken, cultural influence, the compassionate ministry of the Holy Spirit, and loving our neighbors, the Vineyard community of churches seeks to be intentional about nurturing the lives of those who call us their family.

The Christmas Story

Luke 1:26-38

(The Angel visits Mary, Mary's response, the *Magnificat* - Mary's song of worship)

Matthew 1:18-25 or Luke 2:1-7

(Matthew: The engagement, Joseph's dream; Luke: Census and short birth narrative)

Luke 2:8-20

(The Shepherds see the Angelic Host)

Matthew 2:1-12

(The Wise Men come from the East)

INBREAKING

THE KINGDOM COME AT CHRISTMAS

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