

ROOTED ACT III

foretold.

ADVENT 2023



Lord Jesus, Master of both the light and the darkness,
send your Holy Spirit upon our preparations for
Christmas.

We who have so much to do
seek quiet spaces to hear your voice each day.

We who are anxious over many things
look forward to your coming among us.

We who are blessed in so many ways
long for the complete joy of your kingdom.

We whose hearts are heavy
seek the joy of your presence.

We are your people, walking in darkness,
yet seeking the light.

To you we say, "Come Lord Jesus!" Amen.

Advent Prayer by Henri Nouwen

Find out how to go deeper in your faith this season here:



CHURCHBCC.ORG/ROOTED

daily reading guide

DECEMBER 3–JANUARY 6

Week 1: Wonderful Counselor

- ☐ Dec 3 Sunday Worship
- ☐ Dec 4 Isaiah 2:1–5, 6:1–8, 7:13–14
- ☐ Dec 5 Isaiah 9:1–7
- ☐ Dec 6 Isaiah 11:1–9
- ☐ Dec 7 Isaiah 12:2–6
- ☐ Dec 8 Matt 1:1–25
- ☐ Dec 9 Matt 2

Week 2: Mighty God

- ☐ Dec 10 Sunday Worship
- ☐ Dec 11 Isaiah 25:1–9, 26:1–9
- ☐ Dec 12 Isaiah 32:1–4, 16–20, 33:2
- ☐ Dec 13 Isaiah 35
- ☐ Dec 14 Matt 4:1–17
- ☐ Dec 15 Matt 8:1–4, 17
- ☐ Dec 16 Matt 12

Week 3: Everlasting Father

- ☐ Dec 17 Sunday Worship
- ☐ Dec 18 Matt 6:9–13, 19:13–15
- ☐ Dec 19 Isaiah 40:1–11, 42:1–17
- ☐ Dec 20 Isaiah 49: 8–18, 52:1–12, 53
- ☐ Dec 21 Isaiah 60:1–3, 17–22
- ☐ Dec 22 Isaiah 61
- ☐ Dec 23 Luke 4:14–21

Week 4: Prince of Peace

THE BIRTH OF JESUS

- ☐ Dec 24 Sunday Worship
- ☐ Dec 25 Luke 2:1–20
- ☐ Dec 26 Luke 1:39–55
- ☐ Dec 27 Luke 1:67–79
- ☐ Dec 28 Micah 5:2, 6:1–8
- ☐ Dec 29 Matt 28:16–20
- ☐ Dec 30 Nehemiah 1:7–10, 8:10

Week 5: Advocate

Launching into the new year with famous passages from the prophets and shorter Old Testament books.

- ☐ Dec 31 Sunday Worship
- ☐ Jan 1 Ecclesiastes 3–5
- ☐ Jan 2 Jeremiah 29–31
- ☐ Jan 3 Ezekiel 36–37
- ☐ Jan 4 Joel
- ☐ Jan 5 Haggai
- ☐ Jan 6 Zechariah 4 & 8

ADVENT DEVOTIONAL: CONNECT WITH GOD AND OTHERS

- Daily reflections and prayers written by someone from the BCC community. Meet them on each page!
- Weekly Questions & Practices for all ages, individuals, families, or groups.

Welcome to Advent at Bethany 2023

Advent is a time to get ready for the birth of Christ. For thousands of years of church history, God's people have practiced this four-week preparation phase. It is a time of reflection, joy, contemplation, and consideration of the meaning of Jesus' birth. It is a time for us to truly consider Christ.

As a church, we're committed to reading the Bible from beginning to end this year. We call it Rooted, a 44-week journey from "In the beginning" of Genesis 1 to "Amen" in Revelation 22. Please READ WITH US this month, and, if at all possible, engage the devotions and questions with a friend or family member.

We have titled our Advent series FORETOLD. The birth of Jesus was foretold in the Old Testament. Isaiah prophesied that when the Messiah was born, He would be called **Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace**. By focusing on the names of Christ from Isaiah 9:6, we will connect the New Testament stories of Jesus' birth with the Old Testament prophecies about the birth of our Lord. To start the new year, we turn to God as Advocate and will engage a selection of readings from other prophets—some revealing the longing for Messiah, and others pointing to the effects Messiah will have.

May you find meaning and purpose in the pages ahead. In a world of temporality, may you experience both the foretelling and fulfillment of Christ bringing peace, truth, and belonging to us all.

May Christ shine in your hearts and in your homes this Advent Season,



Pastor Scott Sund
*Senior Pastor,
Bethany Community Church*

Rooted Act III: Foretold—Advent 2023

Before babies are born, parents stress over the first big decision of parenthood. What will the name be? Will it be a family name? Will it be the name of a historical figure or a mentor? Will it be a conventional name or something more... let's call it "unique?" Google will be searched, books flipped through, advice sought (and likely ignored!). After all of this, a fitting name will be given.

In the Old Testament, names were more than just names; they were aspirations, reminders, and descriptions of what the child would hopefully be and accomplish. Long before God sent His son, Jesus, He selected names that would perfectly describe the Messiah:

The virgin will conceive and give birth to a son and will call him Immanuel. –Isaiah 7:14

Matthew connects this verse to the birth of Jesus (Matthew 1:23). One of the great themes of the Book of Isaiah is spiritual light and darkness. In Matthew 4:16, Jesus quotes Isaiah chapter 9:

**The people living in darkness have seen a great light;
on those living in darkness a light has dawned.**

It is in this same chapter that Isaiah proclaims the Messiah will be called:

**Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God,
Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. –Isaiah 9:6**

Isaiah gives these descriptions of the Messiah, and centuries later, the Gospels show how Jesus embodied each of them. Of the eighty-five quotes or references to Isaiah in the New Testament, nine of them are in Matthew! Matthew writes his gospel as a portrait of Jesus as the Messiah promised to Abraham, and, in so doing, builds the bridge between the Old and New Testaments.

Week 1: Wonderful Counselor

WEEK 1 QUESTIONS

- 1: What words from each day's reading reflect God's nature as **Wonderful Counselor**? Underline those!
- 2: How do you experience God as **Wonderful Counselor**?
- 3: What are three things you can do today or this week to participate in God's work as **Wonderful Counselor**? Write these down, share with someone, and try it!

December 4

ISAIAH 2:1–5; 6:1–8 7:13–14

“Let us walk in the light of the Lord.” This deeply encouraging verse promises that, though darkness will attempt to thwart God's purposes in our lives, we are called to walk differently because we are God's people. As Jesus would say later in His ministry:

“You are the light of the world.” As we walk with God, the Wonderful Counselor, in every situation, we ourselves become God's light.

PRAYER

Lord, meet me in the days ahead. Thank You for coming and calling me into relationship. Lord, send me into this Advent season with purpose and patience to wait upon You.

CONTRIBUTOR BIO

Scott Sund is Senior Pastor of Bethany Community Church and Lead Pastor of Bethany North. He loves spending time with his wife and kids and having adventures fishing and boating. Outside of serving the Lord and community, he is passionate about salmon!

December 5

ISAIAH 9:1–7

When I discovered that “פֶּלַעַי יוֹעֵזֶר” (pele’ yo’etz) in Isaiah 9:6 could be better understood as “Wonder or Marvel” Counselor, my perspective completely shifted. Until then, I envisioned Jesus as a tender infant, but I failed to grasp the profound depth of His power. It struck me that **Jesus entered this world not as a soft-spoken advisor but as a force—the Almighty Lord, with unmatched authority and strength.**

PRAYER

Hallelujah Lord Jesus! All power and authority are yours!

CONTRIBUTOR BIO

Anita Colombara is a former Cambodian missionary who now teaches high school Bible study at Bethany Northeast! You **MUST** try her famous homemade Jiaozi dumplings or her experiments with vegan cuisine at the next Bethany Northeast potluck!

December 6

ISAIAH 11:1–9

If you've ever seen a “nurse stump” while hiking, this is what Isaiah sees (11:1). Sin and violence cut off Isaiah's people—and don't we feel that too? But Isaiah says look: there's something growing! In the true vine (Jesus), we are grafted into the coming world where dead stumps sprout green—literally a “re-Genesis” (Matthew 19:28). Faith is standing firm and waiting for God to grow this new world.

PRAYER

Father, where I am dead and cut down like a stump, speak Your word over me, heal me, and make me grow again with Your life.

CONTRIBUTOR BIO

Ben McFarland, originally from the Space Coast, Florida, currently teaches Chemistry at Seattle Pacific University and has attended Green Lake for the last 27 years! Make sure to ask him about classic 90s Christian music and *The Leftovers* TV series.

December 7

ISAIAH 12:2–6

Even in moments of overwhelming fear, proclaiming “**I will trust and not be afraid**” orients me toward God and brings comfort. This passage exemplifies a beautiful progression that naturally unfolds when I lean on God's strength: it results in worship. When I realize how desperately I need the Source of my salvation, strength, defense, and joy—I can't help but sing.

PRAYER

Lord, I admit that I am often filled with fear, wrestling with worry, and struggling with doubt. Help me with my unbelief, increase my trust, and fix my gaze on your Son, Jesus, the Wonderful Counselor.

CONTRIBUTOR BIO

Dan Cole works at Washington Policy Center, but you can find him at Bethany Ballard on Sundays either on stage serving on the worship team or behind the scenes helping with tech. Make sure to ask him about Cincinnati-style chili and vintage Volkswagens!

December 8

MATTHEW 1:1–25

I feel called to slow down through the list of names at the beginning of this chapter. These are people. Families. History. Context. God knew each of them intimately, just as He knows me intimately. I consider Judah's transformation, Ruth's perseverance—each a part of God's story—and this list ends with the birth of Christ, reminding me that God has a plan and that **every story matters**.

PRAYER

God, please help me to remember that You know me intimately and that **I belong in Your story**.

CONTRIBUTOR BIO

Alison Fiedler has been attending Bethany Green Lake for almost 11 years and serves as a leader with the Mothers of Preschoolers (MOPS) ministry! When she's not nerding out on dinosaur facts, you can find her playing with her kiddos, working in architectural lighting design, and running the trails of Ravenna Park!

December 9

MATTHEW 2

God's hand is apparent as He shows up in dreams and directs the steps of those who protect Christ in His infancy, but there is also heartache and evil as Herod edges for power. It is in the duality of this story and my own that I am struck by both God's goodness and His desire to repair the brokenness caused by evil. My hope is in both truths this season.

PRAYER

Lord, help me see Your hand in the greater story of my life and how You are **redeeming even the hardest of stories**.

CONTRIBUTOR BIO

Ashley VanOss is a native of Knoxville, Tennessee, and is now involved at Bethany Northeast! She is a woman of many talents as a mom of three young children, a part-time optician, and coordinator at Women of the Tall Trees.

Week 2: Mighty God

WEEK 2 QUESTIONS

- 1: What words from each day's reading reflect God's nature as **Mighty God**? Underline those!
- 2: How do you experience God as **Mighty God**?
- 3: What are three things you can do today or this week to share the reality of God as **Mighty God**? Write your ideas, share with someone, and try it!

December 11

ISAIAH 25:2–9, 26:1–9

Isaiah 25 describes a feast for all peoples (v. 6), from all nations (v. 7), when death is swallowed up forever (v. 8) on God's Holy Mountain. It invites us—in the language of the Psalm 23—"to feast in the presence of our enemies." In Isaiah 2, we're given the PURPOSE of God's Holy Mountain—a beacon of reconciliation! Swords into plowshares!

PRAYER

Be present at our table, Lord.

Be here and everywhere adored.

Thy children bless and grant that we
May feast in paradise with Thee.

18th Century Moravian Table Doxology by John Cennick

CONTRIBUTOR BIO

Silas Sham, Lead Pastor at Bethany Northeast, is originally from Ontario, Canada. If you haven't tried his smoked meats, you are missing out! A couple of his favorite Bible verses are Gen 1:29 and Rev 22:17—two notable commands: the first is to eat and the last is to drink!

December 12

ISAIAH 32:1–4, 16–20, 33:2

Isaiah's words provide reasons for hope: a glorious future and the promise of a righteous King with assistants that will meet people's needs. This Mighty God allows me the privilege to assist and partner in Kingdom-building. I am to be shelter to the lost and lonely, the unbelieving, poor, and needy; a refuge and of service to the unchurched, under-churched, and even the over-churched! Being a music lover, the lyrics of a praise song from the 1980s come to mind as I process the happy future of living rightly with God: **My life is in You, Lord. My strength is in You.**

PRAYER

Loving Lord, show me with whom I can share the shelter and reassurance of God's love.

CONTRIBUTOR BIO

Robbie Battoe is a full-time grandmother and nanny to her two wonderful granddaughters. She loves morning prayer time with her husband, singing in the choir at Bethany Green Lake, and checking out thrift stores!

December 13

ISAIAH 35

Read Isaiah 35 again (and again!). Notice “what is” (wilderness, dry land, desert, weak hands and knees, anxious hearts...) and what God “will do” (gladness, blossoming, rejoicing, strengthening, leaping, singing...). Let the vision of Isaiah 35 be your vision for your actual life and circumstances today.

PRAYER

Lord, through Your Holy Spirit, instill the hope of **what You can do** in my heart and mind today.

CONTRIBUTOR BIO

Tyler Easley is Pastor Emeritus of Sammamish Presbyterian Church and the husband of BCC Executive Pastor Kendy Easley. In his free time, you might see him walking his two precious Airedales, heading to yoga, or cleaning off a tray of those little white ball cookies at Christmas parties!

December 14

MATTHEW 4:1–17

God's grace takes me by surprise. The Light of the World came not to the power center of Jerusalem, but to Galilee, a forgotten corner of a conquered land. **God remembers the forgotten.** Even in darkness, He sees all of me—the good, bad, and messy—and forgives me. Trusting this, let me repent as Jesus preached and accept the grace given to me.

PRAYER

Father, grant me the faith to trust that You are my light in the darkness and that Your light is enough.

CONTRIBUTOR BIO

Rachel Luo moved to Seattle and soon joined the prayer team at Bethany Green Lake. In her spare time, Rachel cares for her army of houseplants

and is writing a novel! When you meet her, be sure to give her some encouragement for her publishing journey!

December 15

MATTHEW 8:1–4, 17

A man with leprosy kneels before Jesus and says, “Lord if you are willing, you can make me clean.” It stood out to me that he doesn't ask, “Can you” or “Will you;” he says, “You can.” He had faith that God would heal him. I wonder what my prayer life might look like if I **change my phrasing from “Can you” to “You can.”**

PRAYER

Jesus, teach me to trust in Your will and know that You are the Mighty God who heals.

CONTRIBUTOR BIO

Emma Ferguson volunteers with the Youth and Children's Ministry at Bethany Ballard. When she's not running her small business where she sells jewelry and artwork, you can find her at the Ballard Sunday Farmers Market or walking with her dog, Norman!

December 16

MATTHEW 12

Matthew gives us a ringside seat. As one of the 12 disciples, he sees Jesus firsthand healing, teaching, and challenging the religious establishment. Then, in the midst of it all, Matthew shows us what he REALLY SEES: Jesus fulfilling Isaiah's ancient prophecy of the Messiah—one who brings hope and justice in a gentle, humble, yet powerful and ultimate way; not only for the Jews, but for everyone... even for me.

PRAYER

Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, **fill me** with Your hope today.

CONTRIBUTOR BIO

Ed Buffalow is a “right-brain” former architect in a left-brained world who has never fully retired. He uses his skills for garden design, home projects, woodworking, watercolor painting, and is a lead volunteer for Adult Ministries at Bethany Green Lake!

Week 3: Everlasting Father

WEEK 3 QUESTIONS

- 1: What words from each day's reading reflect God's nature as **Everlasting Father**? Underline those!
- 2: How do you experience God as **Everlasting Father**?
- 3: What are three things you can do today or this week to share God's loving care as **Everlasting Father**? Write your ideas, share with someone, and try it!

December 18

MATTHEW 6:9–13, 19:13–15

In Matthew 6, Jesus teaches us to pray “May your kingdom come, may your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.” It's easy to get overwhelmed with bad news these days, but this text provides our Advent reminder to look for, long for, pray for, wait for God's reign to be made visible. May we never lose hope in our waiting: **God's reign will be made visible!**

PRAYER

I pray that I will hear Your voice and step into my part of the story You are writing in the world to make that reign visible.

CONTRIBUTOR BIO

Richard Dahlstrom taught at Bethany since December of 1995 and led faithfully as Senior Pastor. Now a Teaching Pastor at Green Lake, he continues to focus on empowering and equipping the next generation. During the winter time, when he's not hiking, skiing, or climbing, he likes to enjoy Spritz cookies!

December 19

ISAIAH 40:1–11, 42:1–17

There are very few things as comforting as knowing **you are in good hands**. Whether it is being taken care of by someone who is great at what they do, or being held by someone who loves you very much, it brings peace and hope to both what has happened already and also what is to come.

PRAYER

Father, may Your embrace be what makes this season special.

CONTRIBUTOR BIO

Nathaniel Tally is a Chicago native and loves a good board game or party game! When he's not playing with the Worship band at Bethany Green Lake, you'll find him reading the *Foundation* book series or hanging out in the Bellevue Downtown park!

December 20

ISAIAH 49:8–18, 25:1–12, 53

I have a tattoo of a Cross on my upper back. Sometimes I forget it is there until I see it in a mirror. But God doesn't forget about His people. He has engraved them on the palm of His hand. What a wonderful invitation from God to remember His historic faithfulness and how He has delivered me. God triumphs over all which is, indeed, good tidings.

PRAYER

Heavenly Father, have mercy on my forgetful nature and **remind me of Your great faithfulness** through the power of Your Holy Spirit.

CONTRIBUTOR BIO

Stephanie Wall is a wife, mom to two sweet kiddos, and a rockstar volunteer at Bethany Green Lake, having served with MOPS, CYFM, on search committees, with Worship, on the Local Advisory Team, and more! A woman of many talents, she is an expert with power tools, opening a bottle of champagne, and backing up vehicles of all sizes!

December 21

ISAIAH 60:1–3, 17–22

As I write this, a brutal war is happening in the very place these verses declare “devastation and destruction will be gone from your [Israel's] borders.” I take that to mean these promises are yet to come. God is faithful, though. One day, “every tear will be wiped away... there will be no more death.” The old order of things will be gone, and the everlasting light of our everlasting Father will shine on all who call on Him. **May we reflect that light in dark places, until He comes again.**

PRAYER

Breath Prayer: [inhale] Lord Jesus, [exhale] Come quickly

CONTRIBUTOR BIO

JP Harris is the only person in Seattle who doesn't play pickleball, but he does enjoy a good trail run or smash burger. You'll find him at Bethany

West Seattle on the tech team, helping with the Family Ministry, or serving on the Local Oversight Team!

December 22

ISAIAH 61

Much of my day is a repetition of fairly mundane tasks: making meals, folding laundry, stories, snuggles. Yet these huge promises in Isaiah—embodied and made complete in Jesus—are for me, too. And, through God’s Spirit, glimpses of renewal, restoration, rebuilding, and rejoicing are made known even in my piles of dishes, kids shoes tied one more time, and bear hugs after tears. Through these simple acts of faithfulness, God is cultivating a deeper sense of righteousness and hope.

PRAYER

May my everyday moments be an act of participation in Your work of restoration and renewal, Lord Jesus.

CONTRIBUTOR BIO

Linnea Wheaton is a former Middle School Spanish teacher, an avid power walker, and a storyteller for the preschoolers at Bethany Green Lake. When she’s not enjoying a good game of cribbage or the newest episode of *Taskmaster*, you can find her being a super mom to her three kiddos!

December 23

LUKE 4:14–21

I love seeing God’s work through Jesus. The Spirit increases Jesus’ favor, people listen with interest, He receives the honor of reading scripture, and the fulfillment of prophecy is God’s work through Him. Jesus’ life gives us a template: He went to church, taught, and read. We too can do the same and glorify Him.

PRAYER

Jesus, bring me clarity to **see You working in and through me** in all things big and small.

CONTRIBUTOR BIO

John Thompson is a Chicago native and a house plant enthusiast who currently serves on the Local Oversight Team at Bethany Ballard. In his spare time, you will find him at Cafe Fiore, playing Dungeons & Dragons, and watching all four seasons of *Star Wars Rebels*!

Week 4: Prince of Peace

WEEK 4 QUESTIONS

- 1: What words from each day’s reading reflect God’s nature as **Prince of Peace**? Underline those!
- 2: How do you experience God as **Prince of Peace**?
- 3: What are three things you can do today or this week to share God’s presence as **Prince of Peace**? Write your ideas, share with someone, and try it!

December 25

LUKE 2:1–20

Christmas has become the king of holidays—full of special gatherings, fancy meals, festive outfits, and anticipated traditions—but I love that this passage emphasizes the humble birth of King Jesus. The most significant event in all of human history—a beautiful collision of heaven and earth—comes through unlikely people in ordinary places; not the way we might expect, and yet, exactly as God intended.

PRAYER

Jesus, help us to see You today through unlikely people in ordinary places!

CONTRIBUTOR BIO

Eric Henderson is Executive Lead Pastor of Bethany Community Church and Lead Pastor of Bethany Green Lake. When not serving at Bethany, you will find him on a sunny golf course, listening to a ton of podcasts, watching Seattle sports, and, of course, hanging out with his amazing wife and two kids (who can often be found greeting on Sundays)!

December 26

LUKE 1:39–55

Growing up in Iran, I learned the Assyrian greeting Shlamaloukh (“peace be upon you”). This language is a version of Aramaic (the language of Elizabeth and Mary) and very close to Arabic and Hebrew. The Assyrian women in our church were like my aunties. God’s Spirit announced His greatest gift to the world through such humble women whom He “has lifted up” and through whom He has blessed us all.

PRAYER

Praise you, oh most high God, for **we are not alone** or without hope.

CONTRIBUTOR BIO

David Woodward has a passion for caring for his family, especially his grandson, as well as mentoring young professionals and volunteering at Bethany Green Lake. Make sure to ask him to recite the first 100 numbers of Pi in his famous Brooklyn accent next time you see him!

December 27

LUKE 1:67–79

Luke 1:67 starts with God’s fulfillment of His promises to His people, prophets, and the oath God swore to Abraham. Zechariah reminds us of an even bigger promise to be fulfilled: The one coming will bring... knowledge of salvation... forgiveness of sins... tender mercy... light... guidance. Trusting in God’s promises shows us a new way: a path reliant on Him, a “path of peace” described in Philippians 4:6–7:

**Do not be anxious about anything,
but in every situation, by prayer and petition,
with thanksgiving, present your requests to God.
And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will
guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.**

PRAYER

Jesus, thank You for Your faithfulness in my life. Please help me to remember that You guide our feet onto the path of peace.

CONTRIBUTOR BIO

Suzanne Rettenmier serves in many ways at Bethany Green Lake, including Welcome Team, Community Meal, and Aurora Commons breakfast preparation. Along with hiking and walking with her new puppy, she loves cooking for people any time!

December 28

MICAH 5:2, 6:1–8

When God called Abraham, He promised that “all peoples on earth would be blessed through Him.” From Abraham and Sarah came the nation of Israel, God’s chosen people. To Abraham, God promised the land of Canaan. Through these people, God would bless all the peoples on earth. We see this blessing brought to fullness in Jesus Christ—the King born to rule over all the nations.

PRAYER

Jesus, heir to the throne of David, we thank You for fulfilling Your Father’s plan of redemption.

CONTRIBUTOR BIO

James Kearny is a Mission’s Associate for Presbyterian Reformed Ministries International and is a volunteer at Bethany Ballard. A man of many talents, he is a pianist, a professional actor, and a carpenter who has a knack for mimicry. Make sure to ask him about his favorite holiday treat: fruitcake from the Gethsemane Monastery!

December 29

MATTHEW 28:16–20

When rulers seek to expand their kingdom, they send soldiers—those who mete out violence and destruction to conquer. They don’t send peacekeepers; they don’t offer comfort or acceptance. Everyone shows us who they are, not by their words, but by their actions. Jesus shows who he is: the deliverer, one who saves not a mass of faceless people, but individually. You. Me. Everyone. Forever there when we need him.

PRAYER

Jesus, thank you for accepting me as I am and bringing me the peace that I need.

CONTRIBUTOR BIO

Rachel Robins has a Master’s of Fine Arts in Writing Popular Fiction and currently leads a hybrid small group at Bethany West Seattle for unmarried congregants. In her free time, you will find her at the potter’s lathe or entrenched in the vast world of Animal Crossing!

December 30

NEHEMIAH 1:7–10, 8:10

Nehemiah speaks with hope for the future in this passage. But right before this, in verse 4, he says, “I sat down and wept. I mourned for days.” In times of turmoil, which rightly call for weeping and mourning, it’s hard for me to find hope. Where does this ability come from for Nehemiah? How do we—as individuals and as a church—weep and mourn, yet also summon hope?

PRAYER

Oh God, give us the faith to see glimmers of hope—not instead of weeping and mourning, but **in the midst** of it.

CONTRIBUTOR BIO

Kevin Hilman has been at Bethany for over 27 years and is a congregant of Bethany Northeast. When he's not playing rock and roll covers with his "dad band," you'll find him hanging out with his spouse, two kiddos, and dog!

Week 5: Advocate

WEEK 5 QUESTIONS

- 1: What words from each day's reading reflect God's nature as **Advocate**? Underline those!
- 2: How do you experience God as **Advocate**?
- 3: What are three things you can do today or this week to share God's connection with people as an **Advocate**? Write your ideas, share with someone, and try it!

January 1

I love the book of Ecclesiastes. It is so relatable and brings me to a place of surrender. Yes, life is hard, fleeting, and unpredictable. So often I live with an illusion of control, but Ecclesiastes confronts that illusion, inviting me instead to be present to life's small joys, like a good meal with a friend. The beauty of the Advent season is that **God enters these mundane moments**, making the everyday holy.

PRAYER

Loving God, help me loosen my grip on the circumstances of my life and be more present to You.

CONTRIBUTOR BIO

Abby Odio is the Interim Teaching Pastor at Bethany West Seattle, a parent of two small humans, and a wife to her adventure partner, Sam. When she's not teaching or writing sermons and poetry, Abby loves to go on hikes, cheer on the Seahawks, watch *The Bear*, and drive with the heat on full blast!

January 2

JEREMIAH 29–31

As the children of Israel languished in exile, God spoke to them a timely message of grace, promise, and hope. God called them to wait patiently. I've encountered disappointments and uncertainties along the path, and with each challenge and transition, have been reassured of God's love and

care—that He had next steps for me and my family in His service. By faith and the promise of His Word, I've grown to know that, in Him, **there is a future and a hope.**

PRAYER

Father, in seasons of uncertainty, help me to wait on You with patience and hope.

CONTRIBUTOR BIO

Don Riggs is often lovingly referred to as "the Don" because of his incredible knowledge and wisdom. He served BCC as Pastor of Care for 12 years and, even after his retirement, continues to mentor leaders at Bethany. He loves working in the garden and spending quality time with his amazing wife, Kristy, and his grandchildren.

January 3

EZEKIEL 36–37

I can struggle with feelings of self-worth sometimes. In my isolated evenings, my spirit can feel as desiccated as these dry bones. I believe, though, just as God called these bones back to vibrant life and purpose, we can pray to allow God to heal our broken, lifeless places—to breathe the breath of life into our tired, flawed, and frail humanity. I'm finding that, even in this broken world, there is hope.

PRAYER

Generous God, thank You for Your Holy Spirit that **transforms our dry deserts into vibrant green forests.**

CONTRIBUTOR BIO

Corrie Duryée is a fourth-generation Seattleite and spends much of her time making films and playing with her two Siberian cats! She serves at Bethany Green Lake on the prayer ministry and as a group leader. Make sure to ask her about her favorite neighborhood hangout, Gretchen's Coffee!

January 4

JOEL

Joel warns of coming destruction: land laid to waste and people's joy withered away. I feel my joy withered by troubles—my own and those of the world. But it is so clear that God doesn't want that for me or the world! He asks me to turn to Him sincerely and completely. He has compassion for me and promises to repay "for the years the locusts have eaten."

PRAYER

Lord, **I confess that I struggle with a faithless heart that** allows my joy to be taken by troubles, but I rejoice that You love me, bless me, and are my refuge.

CONTRIBUTOR BIO

Christine Hansen attends Bethany Ballard and serves as a Council Member working with the Governance Committee. When not out in her garden or working on a home renovation project, you can find her cheering on her treasured San Francisco Giants! (At least it's not the 49-ers, right?)

January 5

HAGGAI

Haggai reminds me of my role in God's story. Choices matter. God's promise endures. Haggai speaks to my insecurities—even in a house surrounded by abundance, there is discontent. Putting my priorities before God's sows unfruitfulness, and, even when He is prioritized, I can feel discouraged when I don't see immediate fruit. Haggai ends with the promise, though, that His glory will be seen. I find hope for myself in this.

PRAYER

Lord, help me to be discontented in my vision, so that I can be reminded of Yours.

CONTRIBUTOR BIO

Melissa Goss-Jentz has attended Bethany Green Lake for over 11 years, serves on the Council, and is the Bethany Missions liaison to Aurora Commons. When not training for a triathlon, Melissa loves spending time with her husband and two children or eating that weird blueberry jello mold that no one else will touch at family gatherings.

January 6

ZECHARIAH 4, 8

In the revitalized Jerusalem to which exiles of Israel returned, God promised, "peace for the seed; the vine will yield its fruit, the land will yield its produce and the heavens will give their dew" (8:13). I find myself drawn to this: a peace beyond the absence of political conflict, but a true shalom in which God's growth—the image-bearing sweetness of God's creation—can flourish in safety and vitality.

PRAYER

Lord, now more than ever, we seek to trust You as our advocate, relying on Your peace to fill our lives, and **make us people of safety in an increasingly anxious world.**

CONTRIBUTOR BIO

Kristi Dahlstrom has been attending Bethany Green Lake for over 28 years and currently serves as a coordinator for the Mothers of Preschoolers Ministry and on the Local Oversight Team. When she's not e-biking with her two sweet daughters, she might be listening to the "Side Door" podcast about artifacts in the Smithsonian while caring for houseplants or thinking about the intricacies of grammar and language!

Behind the Design

**For unto us a child is born,
to us a son is given...
And he will be called
Wonderful Counselor,
Mighty God,
Everlasting Father,
Prince of Peace.**

Isaiah 9:6