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A DAILY DEVOTIONAL TO PREPARE YOUR HEART FOR CHRISTMAS

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Advent is a time to prepare our hearts as we look forward to celebrating Jesus' birth; the One who is Hope and Life. This devotional is designed for you to set aside some time each day to read from the Bible and reflect on it, listen to music to direct your heart toward God, then spend some time talking with Him in prayer.

The QR code below will bring you to a curated Spotify playlist of songs for you to listen to during this advent season. There is a song each day as part of your devotional time with God.

May you experience Jesus as your Hope this Christmas season in a new and fresh way.



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## DAY 1: DECEMBER 1, 2023

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**READ:** Isaiah 40:1-5, John 1:6-8 and Luke 1:76-79

1. Are you someone who likes to be prepared? How far in advance do you find yourself preparing for things? Vacations, holidays, hardship?
2. What do Christmas preparations usually look like for you personally? In your home?
3. Why is preparation important?
4. What does it appear that the role of John the Baptist was in John 1:6-8 in preparing the way for Jesus?

**LISTEN:**

**Prepare Ye the Way** by Caedmon's Call

**PRAY:**

Spend some time talking to God. How does He want you to prepare for Christmas this year? Is there something He would like you to do differently? Take out of your schedule? Add to your schedule? Ask Him to prepare your heart for all He has for you this Christmas.

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## DAY 2: DECEMBER 2, 2023

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**READ:** Isaiah 40:1-5 and John 1:23-28

1. When a king came to town, all measures were taken in order to “make straight the path” for him to get to the center of town: build roads, cut down trees, tear down anything in the path. In making this declaration from Isaiah, John is making a statement about who is coming and who He is preparing the way for – how do you think his statement was received?
2. How do you receive the news that a king is coming – the Messiah, our Savior? How do you prepare to celebrate THAT?
3. In what ways are you creating ways for the people around you to easily get to Jesus? In what ways are you putting up barriers for others to experience the Hope of Jesus?

**LISTEN:**

**How Many Kings** by Downhere

**PRAY:**

Spend some time talking to God. How does he want you to create paths for others to learn about Jesus this season? How does He want you to make this season less about you and your wants/desires and more about the Hope He has for you to hear, and for you to invite others into a position of hearing as well? Who is someone in your life that you can pray for to hear the Hope of Jesus this Christmas season?

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## DAY 3: DECEMBER 3, 2023

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**READ:** Psalm 27:14, Isaiah 40:28-31, Isaiah 7:14, Isaiah 9:6-7

1. What is the longest you've had to wait for something? Is there anything that you are currently waiting for?
2. Hundreds of years before His life on earth, the birth of the Messiah was prophesied in Isaiah. At what point in all those years would you be likely to give up on the hope of Him actually arriving?
3. Jesus was a promise from God – even though it felt like a long time to wait. What are the promises you know that God has stated in the Bible? What are the promises you cling to in the hard times, or when all hope seems lost in your life?

**LISTEN:**

**Welcome to Our World** by Michael W Smith

**PRAY:**

Spend time crying out to God for the things you wait for; praising Him for the promises He has kept, and asking Him to remind you of His promises on the days that seem darkest.

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## DAY 4: DECEMBER 4, 2023

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**READ:** John 1:1-5 and John 1:14

1. How are physical darkness and spiritual darkness similar? When was the last time you experienced either and what feelings came up in them?
2. What does the phrase “in the beginning” make you think of? What does the beginning of something mean?
3. Who is “the Word”? How is it possible that the Word was in the beginning and has now also become flesh?
4. How do these verses begin to show us the hope that is found in Jesus coming to earth?

**LISTEN:**

**His Name is Jesus** by Phil Wickham

**PRAY:**

Spend some time talking to God. What does He want to show you about Himself today? Where are you most in need of the Hope that is found through Jesus in your life right now? Are there places where it feels like you have lost all Hope? Ask Him to reveal these things to you and to remind you of the Hope that He brings.

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## DAY 5: DECEMBER 5, 2023

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**READ:** Micah 5:2-3 and Matthew 2:1-6

1. What was the significance of Jesus being born in Bethlehem? What kind of significance would that have brought to the town - one that was not big enough to put on a map?
2. Why do you think God chose the smallest town, the lowliest manger, the lowest way for Jesus to be born?
3. When was the last time you felt too small or too insignificant?

**LISTEN:**

**O Little Town of Bethlehem** by JJ Heller

**PRAY:**

Spend some time listening. Is there anything that God is speaking to you in this moment? How is He asking you to respond to Him? What areas of your life does He want to speak Hope and life into today? What areas of your life need to know that He understands and that He is with you. He wants to hear from you.

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## DAY 6: DECEMBER 6, 2023

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READ: Luke 1:26-38

1. We are told that Mary was greatly troubled by this greeting. Why do you think so?
2. Put yourself in Mary's place in this encounter. What would be going through your head? What kind of feelings would you be experiencing in this moment? Be honest, real and raw.
3. How does being "the Lord's servant" relate to accepting extraordinary assignments by God?
4. Have you ever been asked by God to serve him in a way that seemed unreasonable to you? Were you willing to say yes to Him?

LISTEN:

**Hope Has a Name** by Passion

PRAY:

Ask God for what a life marked by service would look like for you. Be honest about the reasons you might use to resist the idea of serving God and others. Pray specifically about ways to serve during this season that will focus on the needs of others instead of the desires of self.

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## DAY 7: DECEMBER 7, 2023

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**READ:** Matthew 1:18-25 and Isaiah 7:14

1. What would you do if someone you knew well who was pregnant claimed to still be a virgin? Can you blame Joseph for struggling with this news?
2. Why do you think the Lord waited to appear until after Joseph had considered to separate from Mary? (vs. 20) Wouldn't it make more sense for Him to appear to Joseph before the struggle?
3. When have you struggled to believe in what God has asked you to believe?
4. Have you ever been encouraged by the equivalent of a special encounter with God?

**LISTEN:**

**God of the Impossible** by Lincoln Brewster

**PRAY:**

Talk to God about something you are struggling to believe. Perhaps it's that God really cares about you. Perhaps that you are truly forgiven. Perhaps that God can make something good grow out of the pain you are experiencing. Ask God to reveal himself to you. Find comfort in the man who said, "I believe, help me overcome my unbelief". (Mark 9:24)

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## DAY 8: DECEMBER 8, 2023

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**READ:** Luke 1:39-56 and Hebrews 10:25

1. Why do you think Mary went to see Elizabeth?
2. How are these two women different?  
What do they have in common?
3. Elizabeth was already 6 months pregnant (1:36) and Mary stayed there for 3 months (1:56). How might they have encouraged each other during this time?
4. What does it look like for your “soul to magnify the Lord” as Mary sings?

**LISTEN:**

**My Soul Magnifies the Lord** by Chris Tomlin

**PRAY:**

If you find encouragement from the people in your life, spend some time thanking God for them and praising Him for that gift. If not, ask that God might place a person in your life who can be an encouragement to you AND ask that you would be willing to use your experiences to encourage another person to faithfully follow Jesus. Let your soul magnify the Lord during this time.

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## DAY 9: DECEMBER 9, 2023

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**READ:** Matthew 2:1-12 and Romans 12:1-2

1. How would you define the word 'worship' to someone who hasn't heard it before?
2. Why were the Magi coming to worship a baby who had recently been born?
3. Do you believe Jesus is worthy of your worship?  
Why or why not?
4. What does worship look like for you on a daily or weekly basis?

**LISTEN:**

**Born is the King (It's Christmas)** by Hillsong Worship

**PRAY:**

Spend some time worshipping Jesus for what He has done and for who He is. Use this time also to ask Him any questions you may have about Him — things you may not understand quite yet but would like to. How does He want to reveal Himself to you this Christmas season? How can you create space in your days to worship Him?

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## DAY 10: DECEMBER 10, 2023

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**READ:** Matthew 2:1-2, 9-12

1. Why do you think the story of the Magi is included in the gospel of Matthew?
2. We don't know much about where they are coming from, what their history is, why they've entered the picture or how they knew about Jesus' birth. Does that bother you?
3. Is it important to you to identify what the star was or how it came to be? Is this detail of the story important?
4. Sometimes people get so obsessed with the side details of a story that they fail to focus on the core message. What lessons can we learn from the Magi that have nothing to do with the star?

**LISTEN:**

**Is He Worthy** by Andrew Peterson

**PRAY:**

Meditate on the fact that these foreign truth-seekers came and recognized that Jesus was to be treated like a King. Ask God for eyes to see Jesus as a King worth pursuing and worthy of our worship. Pray for the willingness to pursue Jesus and to bend your knee to Him.

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## DAY 11: DECEMBER 11, 2023

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READ: Matthew 2:3-8

1. Why was Herod disturbed? Why was all Jerusalem disturbed?
2. Even though the chief priests and teachers of the law knew their ruler was to be born in Bethlehem, they were uninterested in the appearance of the magi and their quest. Why?
3. Celebrating the birth of a baby does not threaten us. However, if Jesus is really the King of all Kings, how might that change our understanding of Christmas?
4. The religious leaders missed the significance of the birth of Jesus because they could not fathom their Messiah coming in humility for all people. How does that change your view of Christmas? Are there beliefs you have that are getting in the way of truly celebrating the real meaning of Christmas this year?

LISTEN:

**King of Kings/ Angels We Have Heard on High** by Maverick City Music

PRAY:

Pray that you might see the eternal importance of Jesus this Christmas season and not to get distracted by everything else. Ask God to help you identify what might distract you from Christmas this year and that He would remove those distractions. Pray that you wouldn't miss the true meaning of Christmas this year.

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## DAY 12: DECEMBER 12, 2023

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READ: Luke 2:4-7

1. How do you think Mary felt while looking for a guest room? How do you think Joseph felt?
2. How would you feel, having such real needs, with no one making space for you?
3. How can it be that our lives are so full that we have so little room for Jesus?
4. What might Jesus be asking you to do to clear more space for Him in your life?

LISTEN:

**Make Room** by The Church Will Sing

PRAY:

Take a moment to be honest with God (and yourself) about how full your life has become. Ask God to help you give priority to Him; making room in your life for Him to live and move.

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## DAY 13: DECEMBER 13, 2023

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**READ:** Luke 2:8-12, Luke 1:11-13, 1:30

1. Why do you think each divine encounter began addressing fear?
2. If you had an encounter with a divine being, what would be your response?
3. What do you usually do with your fear? How does it show itself in your being and in your life?
4. What are the things that induce fear in your life these days? What do you think God's response would be to that fear?

**LISTEN:**

**No Fear** by Kari Job

**PRAY:**

Read Romans 8:31-39, changing the pronouns to "me" instead of "us". (i.e. If God is for me, who can be against me.) Ask God to help you live in the confidence that comes from knowing He is at work in your world. Cast your cares upon Him. Let Him know what you fear. He is ready and wants to hear about your fears.

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READ: Luke 2:8-14

1. What is the picture that comes to mind from vs. 13? Close your eyes and visualize. If you'd like to spend a bit more time, sketch a drawing of what you see when you read these verses.
2. How would you have responded if you were with the shepherds?
3. The word for "host" is a military term. Most likely what appeared to the shepherds was not an angelic choir, but an angelic army. How does that change the picture of this moment in your mind?

LISTEN:

**Gloria** by MercyMe

PRAY:

Spend some time giving praise to God for HIS GLORY. Take time to ask Him how He wants to reveal His Glory to you this Christmas season. Is there a way that He wants to reframe your view of Him to a more accurate view of who He is and why He came?

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## DAY 15: DECEMBER 15, 2023

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READ: Luke 2:15-20

1. Why do you think the news about Jesus was delivered to shepherds?
2. When reading a story, we tend to identify with someone in the story. Who do you identify with in Luke 2? Why?
3. Hearing about Jesus calls for an active response not a passive one. When you first learned about the life-changing nature of Jesus, what did you do?
4. The shepherds hurried off to the manger to find Jesus. They had a "Let's go!" moment. What is your urgency to meet with Jesus this Christmas season?

LISTEN:

**NOEL** by Chris Tomlin and Lauren Daigle

PRAY:

Take some time to sit before Jesus and talk with Him about whether your faith is currently an active response to Jesus or more of a passive one. Ask Him where He is calling you to be actively pursuing Him and where He is calling you to be a light to others — knowing Jesus and making Him known.

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## DAY 16: DECEMBER 16, 2023

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READ: Luke 2:19

1. Try to put yourself in Mary's place. What would you be thinking about?
2. What things do you think Mary "treasured" and what do you think she "pondered"?
3. As you look back over your journey with Jesus, what are some things you treasure?
4. What are some things you are currently pondering?

LISTEN:

**Behold the Lamb of God** by Andrew Peterson

PRAY:

Ask the Lord to show you where you have taken for granted the wonder of His love for you and His willingness to come to this earth as a baby. What do you want to say to Him today? Do you have any questions? Ponderings? Wonderings? Spend time praising Him for coming to this earth.

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## DAY 17: DECEMBER 17, 2023

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**READ:** Matthew 2:10, Luke 2:10, 2:20

1. How would you define the word joy? What are some things that give you great joy?
2. The angel was clear that the good news would cause great joy. How does the Christmas story give us great joy?
3. Would you describe your life as one marked by joy?
4. What might be stealing your joy as Christmas comes near? How can the Good News of Jesus protect your joy?

**LISTEN:**

**Joy to the World (Joyful, Joyful)** by Phil Wickham (The CHOSEN version)

**PRAY:**

Thank God for giving you reason to have joy in your life. Lay before His throne all the things that are stealing your joy currently as Christmas draws near. As you pray, be filled with the hope that comes from the God who gives us reason to sing — the giver of joy.

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## DAY 18: DECEMBER 18, 2023

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READ: Matthew 2:13-18

1. Why would Herod do such a horrible thing?
2. Herod's resistance was not on religious grounds or about politics. It was only about preserving his position as king. Even though kings are not a part of our daily lives here in America, how is seeking to be in charge of our own lives similar or different to being the king of our own lives?
3. When Jesus comes as the forever king, how does that look in our own lives? Why is this a struggle for so many?
4. Where in your life is it hard to bend your knee to the King of kings?

LISTEN:

**Manger Throne** by Phil Wickham

PRAY:

Ask the Lord to show you areas in your life that He is leading you to humbly bow your knee in reverence to HIM as king. Tell Him about the areas that are hard for you to let go of—hard for you to let HIM be king rather than seeking to fill that position yourself. If led, spend some time worshipping the King of Kings.

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## DAY 19: DECEMBER 19, 2023

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READ: Luke 2:36-38

1. Why do you think Luke included the story of Anna?
2. Anna was given this message by God — it did not come from herself. Is there someone who Jesus is leading you to share the message of Hope this Christmas?
3. Anna's message was for those looking forward to the redemption of the people of Israel. Is seeing God take his rightful place as King something you look forward to? What does that look like in your life?

LISTEN:

**O Come, O Come Immanuel** by King and Country

PRAY:

Spend some time being real with Jesus. Ask Him to come into the broken places of your life and the broken people of your life. If you feel desperate, let Him know. He wants to hear from you. If you feel close to giving up, ask Him for diligence to keep asking and waiting and longing for His redemption. Sit in silence with Him and listen.

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## DAY 20: DECEMBER 20, 2023

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READ: Galatians 4:4-7

1. In the culture of that day, there was no way a slave could be anything other than a slave unless someone else was willing to pay for their freedom. The Bible states that we were slaves to sin. What does it look like to be a slave to sin? Are there times when you feel like a slave to sin?
2. How would you describe being redeemed out of slavery?
3. What keeps you from fully embracing that you are God's child?

LISTEN:

**No Longer Slaves** by Zach Williams

PRAY:

Praise God that He has redeemed you and made Him your child. Let Him know the times that it's hard for you to remember that you are His child or that you don't feel like His. Ask Him to show you what it looks like even more fully to be known as a child of God and to live like one— all that He wants to give you and be to you. Ask Him to help you understand more fully— and if your heart is led, spend some time worshiping Him.

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## DAY 21: DECEMBER 21, 2023

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**READ:** John 1:9-12, John 3:16-19

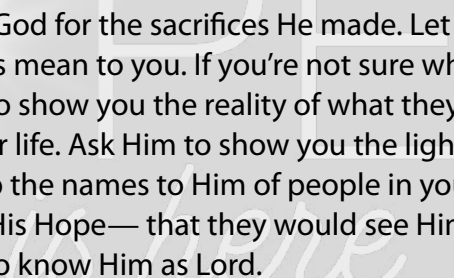
1. Reading the life of Jesus, it seems impossible that he would be rejected by some. Why were people unable to accept Jesus as God?
2. How would you feel if you sacrificed much for someone and they didn't value your sacrifices?
3. What does the life of Jesus on this earth, death on the cross, and resurrection mean to you?
4. What does it mean that Jesus is the true light?

**LISTEN:**

**Light of the World** by Lauren Daigle

**PRAY:**

Spend some time thanking God for the sacrifices He made. Let him know what His sacrifices mean to you. If you're not sure what they mean to you, ask Him to show you the reality of what they could mean for you and your life. Ask Him to show you the light He brings. If you're led, bring up the names to Him of people in your life who need His light and His Hope— that they would see Him and all his Glory and come to know Him as Lord.



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## DAY 22: DECEMBER 22, 2023

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READ: Philippians 2:1-11

1. Why was it necessary that Jesus would become “nothing” and then “humble himself”, becoming obedient to death?
2. Why was the path of humility required for the path of exaltation?
3. Why do we tend to resist the path of humility when Jesus demonstrated its importance?
4. How is humility required to fully exalt Jesus this Christmas? In our lives in general?

LISTEN:

**Silent Night** by Sidewalk Prophets

PRAY:

Ask God where He is leading you to have a humble heart this Christmas. What are the things He would like to remind you about who He is? What are you seeking out of selfish ambition as opposed to humility? Spend some time praising Him for “becoming nothing” and “humbling Himself” both through His life on this earth and through His death on the cross.



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## DAY 23: DECEMBER 23, 2023

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READ: John 1:9-14

1. John seems filled with wonder as he reflects back on having been with Jesus. If you had been John, what events would you remember the most vividly?
2. The part of Christmas that is the most challenging for our minds to grasp is that this baby boy was The Word. What do we lose if we fail to hold on to the humanity of Jesus? What do we lose if we fail to hold on to the divinity of Jesus?
3. Jesus is the true light— how have you seen Him bring light into your life where there was once darkness? Where do you need Him to bring light where there is still darkness?
4. God made His dwelling among us! How does that reality play a part in your relationship with Him?

LISTEN:

**O Holy Night - Live** by Tommee Profitt

PRAY:

What is on your heart today? What would you like to talk to God about? What would you like to hear from Him? He is ready to listen and connect with you. Use the questions above to guide your prayer time with Him today.

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## DAY 24: DECEMBER 24, 2023

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READ: Isaiah 9:2-7

1. Isaiah wrote to a people who knew what it was to be on the losing side of life. Which of his word pictures do you resonate with the most?
2. The people of Israel waited hundreds of years for this hope to be realized. What difference does a promise make when it is so far away?
3. What can you do when life feels hopeless? Who could you call who would help you find hope?
4. Who can you call who might need some hope today?

LISTEN:

**Hope is Alive** by Ellie Holcomb

PRAY:

Spend some time talking to Jesus about the places in life you feel are hopeless. Ask Him to bring His hope to those places and to your heart. Tell Him what it means to you that Hope is alive and ask Him to show you that it is— that HE is. As Christmas approaches, let Him know what your heart's cry is. Ask Him to bring power to the places you need His power....to bring peace to the places you need His Peace....to bring rest to the places you need His rest.

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## DAY 25: DECEMBER 25, 2023

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READ: Isaiah 9:6

1. How does this child being the Wonderful Counselor give hope?
2. How does this child being the Mighty God give hope?
3. How does this child being the Everlasting Father give hope?
4. How does this child being the Prince of Peace give hope?

LISTEN:

**Christmas Day** by Chris Tomlin, We the Kingdom

PRAY:

Praise God for revealing himself in each of these attributes. Identify which is most needed in your life at this time and ask to be able to see Him at work. Celebrate Him today and the birth of our Savior! Include Him in all your celebrations.

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