While We Wait

Week Four: The King

Fully Engaged. Fully Immersed.

Introduction

| Week Four: The King!

The King has come! God did it! He came down from heaven, became human, and chose to dwell among us. It reminds me of a sign I once saw outside of a local church that said,

"Don't make me come down there!" - God

Well he did. And not so he could discipline or punish us. He was compelled by love to come and show us, up close and personal, who he was and what he he was like. Through the life of Jesus, a mere 33 years on this earth, we got to capture a glimpse of God in the flesh! Jesus even said in John 14:9,



"Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father."

And now it is time to celebrate our King! This is a week of feasting. It's like one long Sabbath. We have been waiting for this day. We have been reflecting and studying and preparing and now it's time to give a feast that is fit for a King!

In case you're wondering what Jesus would think about this, Jesus loved to celebrate. (Note: Jesus' first miracle was to replenish the wine that had run out at a wedding. And he didn't cheap out, he refilled with the finest wine!) Feasts and festivals were a vital part of Hebrew life. Jesus would have grown up with this. I am not talking about drunken partying but rather a meaningful, purposeful and communal celebration centred around God and his goodness. Celebration was an important act of Israel's worship and service and it was always pointed toward God. Feasting cultivates joy and we would do well to take our cue from this Hebrew tradition.

"God made us for joy. God is joy, and the joy of living reflects the original joy that God felt in creating us."

Feasting is a way to experience and participate in God's divine joy and reminds us of the proper order, meaning and purpose of our lives. Feasting involved people and food and I would venture to guess, music and dancing as well!

A couple things to note:

- Israel began all their feasts with Sabbath. So let's follow this example as we begin our week.
- Christmas is not a Jewish holiday. It is purely Christian. We are celebrating that the Messiah has come to all people forever.

In our 21st century world, we can play with this a bit as long as we keep God at the centre of our celebration. For feasting, we can host a dinner or a party. Or maybe gather people together to play games or do an activity everyone loves to do.

Don't forget the Sabbath rest! Let's continue with our daily practices of prayer and scripture reading. As well, spend a day reading a book, take a nap, or do a puzzle. It is important to look after ourselves in the midst of the celebration.

Gratefulness is at the heart of feasting, worship and Sabbath. We will be focussing in on this practice this week as well.

There is one final thing we will do this week as we look toward celebrating the end of 2023 and welcoming in 2024. You will be encouraged to take time this week to ask the Lord to give you a "word" for 2024. This will be explained in this week's devotions, but we will basically be asking God for a signpost or a guide unique to each one of us that we can use throughout the year to remind us of his goodness and his desire for us in 2024.

So let's develop the discipline of celebration in our lives. Regularly. Because God is just so good! Welcome King Jesus!

Preparation

A Feasting Week!

This week has a different rhythm and vibe. We get to centre ourselves around the arrival of the King. Each day you will be asked how you will feast and how you will rest. We want to give time and space to focus in on the fulfillment of God's promise of a Messiah. You will be



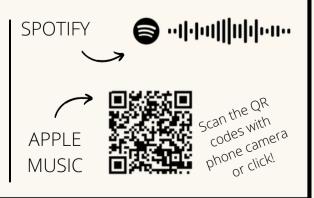
encouraged to find ways to celebrate the birth of King Jesus with friends and family. Gratitude, rest, and feasting will all be part of our rhythm this week.

Candles	Light all four Advent candles plus the Christ candle.
☐ Playlist	Download the Week #4 Advent Playlist - THE KING!
☐ Plans	Check out activities offered around your city.

Weekly Playlist

Here is this week's playlist, "THE KING!".

Download and listen. Use this music to help you lean into your time with the Lord or to quiet your soul and aid with your reflection work.



Weekly Practices

Strength | Caring for the Earth

- Look for opportunities to support more sustainable living and reducing waste.
- COMPOST: Think of ways to utilize leftover plant based foods. Use your city compost to get rid of it or create ways of using it for fertilizer, potting soil and all sorts of things. Here is a website to check out this website **here.**
- For great ideas to reduce waste after Christmas (wrapping paper, food items, Christmas trees, etc), check out this website **here.**

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Strength | Caring for our Body



Our bodies need rest. This is different than sleep. In Matthew 11:28-30, Jesus offers us rest for our souls. This might be a good place to start - beginning your day with him! What does true rest look like, you might be asking?

- Allowing yourself to rest means taking a break from work and chores.
- It's letting go of your schedule and allowing "all of yourself" to relax mind, body, soul.
- Permission to be unscheduled. Nowhere to be.
- Doing things you love to do, that fill you up rather than deplete you.
- Being with people who fill you up
- Trust that God can take care of things while you let go, wind down and rest.

You might be getting the picture that it seems to be all the good things of life. These are gifts from our heavenly Father. Why not let yourself receive them? No guilt. Only love.

Even if you have to work this week, are you able to slow your pace, reduce your schedule, and enjoy some down time? This is all part of soul care and is a vital to our overall health.



Strength | Sabbath

This week we will practice Sabbath through feasting and rest.



Heart | The Practice of Gratitude

Gratefulness is at the heart of prayer and worship. Each day you will be asked 5 things to be grateful for.



One Another | Loving One Another

- Bless 2 people this week one whom you know and one whom you don't know. How can you go the extra mile to bless these people? What is one extra thing you can do for them?
- Send cards to people who have had a significant impact on your life.



Neighbour | God at Work

What have your noticed in your neighbourhood this past month as you have been paying closer attention to those who live near you? What would it look like to bless some of your neighbours this week before the new year?



Light the Christ Candle this evening

| Sabbath Reflection

Read Matthew 1:18-25, Luke 1 & 2:40 - The Story of Jesus birth in its entirety.

- What captures your imagination as you read this story?
- Thinking about the whole story and all the people involved, what do your find yourself wondering about?
- Which of the people do you resonate with most?
- Picturing Jesus, a baby in a manger, as King, how does this disrupt or undermine your picture of what a Messiah should look like?
- How do you think this move of God is a subversive approach to bringing hope and freedom to the world?

As you step into your Christmas Eve celebrations, consider lighting your Christ candle this evening. If you are gathering with others today, think about having an official lighting of the Christ candle together with a reading of Luke 2:1-20



Evening Prayers | Luke 2:8-15

As you come to the end of Christmas Eve and Sabbath, reflect back on the day, inviting the Holy Spirit into your reflection. What stands out to you as the best part of the day? Why? What did you find challenging today? Why? As you look toward the upcoming week, what things are you excited about and what is weighing on you? How will you create space this week to feast and celebrate God? How will you find time to rest and restore your soul?

Pause for a few minutes to meditate on Luke 2:10-11

"Don't be afraid!" he said.

"I bring you good news that will bring great joy to all people. The Saviour—yes, the Messiah, the Lord—has been born today in Bethlehem, the city of David!

And you will recognize him by this sign:

You will find a baby wrapped snugly in strips of cloth, lying in a manger.

"Suddenly, the angel was joined by a vast host of others

—the armies of heaven—

praising God and saying,

"Glory to God in highest heaven,

and peace on earth to those with whom God is pleased."

When the angels had returned to heaven,

the shepherds said to each other, "Let's go to Bethlehem!

Let's see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has told us about."

Looking at your life and what is ahead of you through the lens of this scripture, how does this affect your outlook? What might good news of great joy mean for you in your life today?

As this day draws to a close, take this Christmas hymn, written by Isaac Watts in 1719, and make it prayer of gratitude.

Joy to the World
The Lord is come
Let earth receive her King
Let every heart prepare him room
And heaven and nature sing!

Amen

Christmas Day

Morning Prayers | Psalm 28:6-7

Pray this Psalm over your day:

Take a few moments now to pray this Psalm over your day. Ask the Lord to bless the day, to show you where He is at work and how you can join him. Thank him for his gift of a new life to live out his love, compassion and grace wherever you go today.

Praise the Lord!
For he has heard my cry for mercy
The Lord is my strength and shield.
I trust him with all my heart.
He helps me, and my heart is filled with joy
I burst out in songs of thanksgiving.

Come and see What God has done!



For to us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government will be on his shoulders.

And he will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.

Of the greatness of his government and peace there will be no end.

He will reign on David's throne and over his kingdom, establishing and upholding it with justice and righteousness from that time on and forever.

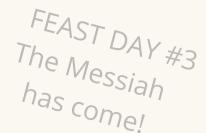
The zeal of the Lord Almighty will accomplish this.

Isaiah 9:6-7

Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is the Messiah, the Lord.

Luke 2:11





Morning Prayers | Psalm 28:6-7

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Praise the Lord! For he has heard my cry for mercy The Lord is my strength and shield. I trust him with all my heart. He helps me, and my heart is filled with joy I burst out in songs of thanksgiving.

Practicing Gratitude

As you enter into this week of feasting and rest, begin by paying attention to the good things in your life.

- 1. What is something lesus has done in the world or in your life that you are grateful for?
- 2. What are you grateful for in your church community?
- 3. What are you grateful for in your own neighbourhood?
- 4. What is one specific thing in your life you are grateful for and why?
- 5. What is one specific person in your life you are grateful for and why?



Morning Reading | The Messiah Video!

Once again, we get to "watch" our Bible reading! You will find the link below. It is approximately 5 minutes in duration. Get out your pen and be ready to take notes on what stands out to you in the videos. Write down any questions you may have.

Scan the QR code with phone camera, or click on the code.





Reflection

As we learned from this video, we can trace the beginning of humanity's problems right back to the Garden of Eden. But we can also see that God has had a rescue plan for humanity right from the start and we see his plan being worked out all through the Bible.

- What do you notice about God and about humanity as you follow this Story of the Messiah all through scripture?
- How do you see the three overarching biblical themes Christ will come, Christ has come, Christ will come again explained through this video?
- How does hearing the whole Messiah Story in one sitting, give you hope for today and our future?

Feast | How Will You Feast Today?

Spend time allowing the Holy Spirit to guide you in mapping out what feasting could look like for you today. Think of people to do things with, places to go, activities to do and food to eat!

Rest | How Will You Find Rest Today?

Pay attention to your mind, body and soul. Ask yourself the following questions;

- Where do I feel fatigue? Unsettled? Discontent? Anxious?
- What does my body need today? (Exercise, rest, sleep...)
- What do I need to fill my mind with today? (Read a good book, listen to uplifting music, podcasts, scripture)



Evening Prayers | Examen

As you come to the end of the day, reflect on where you have experienced Jesus' presence, power and pleasure in your day. Record these in your journal.

- What was life giving today? What brought you joy?
- Were you able to practice loving others today?
 What did this look like?
- What was challenging today?
- Where did you go your own way today instead of following Jesus? Take time to ask forgiveness.
- Where did you see God at work?
- What do you need to surrender to him?

He rules the world with truth and grace
And makes the nations prove
The glories of His righteousness
And wonders of His love.

Amen

As this day draws to a close, take the third verse of this Christmas hymn, written by Isaac Watts in 1719, and make it prayer of gratitude.

Wednesday





Morning Prayers | Psalm 57:10-11 (NLT)

Take a few moments now to pray this Psalm over your day. Ask the Lord how you can bless him today. Thank him for his gift of a new day to live out his love, compassion and grace wherever you go today.

For your unfailing love is as high as the heavens. Your faithfulness reaches to the clouds. Be exalted, O God, above the highest heavens. May your glory shine over all the earth.

Practicing Gratitude

- 1. What is something Jesus has done in the world or in your life that you are grateful for?
- 2. What are you grateful for in your church?
- 3. What are you grateful for in your own neighbourhood?
- 4. What is one specific thing in your life you are grateful for and why?
- 5. What is one specific person in your life you are grateful for and why?



Morning Reading | Lectio Divina

Read Isaiah 9:2, 6-7, John 1:14, John 8:12

- What words or phrases jumped out at you as you read these texts?
- Why do you think the Holy Spirit drew your attention to these words or phrases?
- Where do you see the relationship between the texts and our time and place in the world?



Reflection

How Does Our Light Shine in the World Through Jesus?

With the coming of Jesus, also came the invitation from him to both walk in his light and be his light in the world. With this in mind:

- How do you think God might be guiding you into living into these texts?
- How can you be the light of Jesus in your neighbourhood, workplace, school or other groups you are part of? Think of practical things you can be *doing*.

What do you need to address in your way of **being** the light of Jesus in the world.? (attitudes, speech, etc)

Feast | How Will You Feast Today?

Spend some time allowing the Holy Spirit to guide you in mapping out what feasting could look like for you today. Think of people to do things with, places to go, activities to do and food to eat!

Rest | How Will You Find Rest Today?

Pay attention to your mind, body and soul. Ask yourself the following questions; Pay attention to your mind, body and soul. Ask yourself the following questions;

- Where do I feel fatigue? Unsettled? Discontent? Anxious?
- What does my body need today? (Exercise, rest, sleep...)
- What do I need to fill my mind with today? (Read a good book, listen to uplifting music, podcasts, scripture)



Evening Prayers | **Examen**

As you come to the end of the day, reflect on where you have experienced Jesus' presence, power and pleasure in your day. Record these in your journal.

- What was life giving today? What brought you joy?
- Were you able to practice loving others today? What did it look like?
- What was challenging today?
- Where did you go your own way today instead of following Jesus?
 Take time to ask forgiveness.
- Where did you see God at work?
- What do you need to surrender to him?

Walk in the light, the beautiful light
Come where the dewdrops
of mercy shine bright.

Shine all around us by day and by night.
Jesus the Light of the world.

Now as we come the setting of the sun,
And our eyes behind the evening light
We sing your praises,
O God: Father, Son and Holy Spirit
Amen

(Common Prayer: A Liturgy for Ordinary Radicals by Shane Claiborne, Jonathan Wilson-Hartgrove and Enuma Oruro (Zondervan: Michigan, 2020), p 2

Thursday





Morning Prayers | Psalm 33:4-6, 9-11

Take a few moments now to pray this Psalm over your day. Ask the Lord to speak over your life, into your life and through your life today as you interact with others and carrying out your tasks.

For the word of the Lord holds true, and we can trust everything he does.

He loves whatever is just and good; the unfailing love of the Lord fills the earth.

The Lord merely spoke, and the heavens were created.

He breathed the word, and all the stars were born.

For when he spoke, the world began!

It appeared at his command.

The Lord frustrates the plans of the nations and thwarts all their schemes.

But the Lord's plans stand firm forever; his intentions can never be shaken.

Practicing Gratitude

- 1. What is something Jesus has done in the world or in your life that you are grateful for?
- 2. What are you grateful for at your church?
- 3. What are you grateful for in your own neighbourhood?
- 4. What is one specific thing in your life you are grateful for and why?
- 5. What is one specific person in your life you are grateful for and why?



Morning Reading | Lectio Divina

Read John 1:14, 2 Corinthians 3:2-3,1 Thessalonians 2:13

- What words or phrases jumped out at you as you read these texts?
- Why do you think the Holy Spirit drew your attention to these words or phrases?
- Where do you see the relationship between the texts and our time and place in the world?



Reflection

How Does God's Word Speak Through Us?

When we say 'yes' to following Jesus, we are allowing him to speak through us to others. With this in mind... see the next page.

- How do you think God might be guiding you into living into these texts?
- Words have the power to build people up or tear them down. How do our words reflect who Christ is in our lives?
- Do our words bring life or death to others?
- What needs to be transformed in your own life so that the hope of Jesus is proclaimed through you?



Bonus | Ask the Lord for a Word over 2024!

As the New Year is looming closely, this is a good time to look back on 2023, reflecting on the various events of our life and where you saw God at work. And now, it is important to look ahead at 2024. Before you begin setting goals or making plans and New Year's resolutions, why not take some time throughout this week and ask the Lord to give you a "WORD" for 2024. This "Word" would be something that the Holy Spirit wants to speak to you and through you throughout the year. As well, it gives you a lens with which to view your life and circumstances through as the year unfolds.

Pause and ask the Lord to speak. Come with no agenda except to hear from him. Write down the word you hear or sense or feel in your gut. Carry this word throughout the week and ask the Lord for affirmation that this is the word he wants you to carry throughout 2024. Ask a trusted friend what they think as well. Write down why you think this word might be important for you in the coming year. Then look for signs of this word at work in your life throughout 2024.

End your time by thanking the Lord for speaking to you and entrusting you with this gift of his Word to you.

Feast | How Will You Feast Today?

Spend some allowing the Holy Spirit to guide you in mapping out what feasting could look like for you today. Think of people to do things with, places to go, activities to do and food to eat!

Rest | How Will You Find Rest Today?

Pay attention to your mind, body and soul. Ask yourself the following questions; Pay attention to your mind, body and soul. Ask yourself the following questions;

- Where do I feel fatigue? Unsettled? Discontent? Anxious?
- What does my body need today? (Exercise, rest, sleep...)
- What do I need to fill my mind with today? (Read a good book, listen to uplifting music, podcasts, scripture)



Evening Prayers | **Examen**

As you come to the end of the day, reflect on where you have experienced Jesus' presence, power and pleasure in your day. Record these in your journal.

- What was life giving today? What brought you joy?
- Were you able to practice loving others today? What did this look like?
- What was challenging today?
- Where did you go your own way today instead of following Jesus? Take time to ask forgiveness.
- Where did you see God at work?
- What do you need to surrender to him?

Holy Spirit,
Awaken my soul
Move in my life
Renew my heart and my mind
May my life bring glory to you
Bless Your holy name

Amen

Friday





Morning Prayers | Psalm 147:1-5

As you pray this Psalm over your day, invite the Lord to draw closer to you.

Ask him for healing for you and for others.
Praise him in your weakness.

Praise the Lord.

How good it is to sing praises to our God,
how pleasant and fitting to praise him!

The Lord builds up Jerusalem;
he gathers the exiles of Israel.

He heals the brokenhearted and binds up their wounds.

He determines the number of the stars and calls them each by name.

Great is our Lord and mighty in power;
his understanding has no limit.

Practicing Gratitude

- 1. What is something Jesus has done in the world or in your life that you are grateful for?
- 2. What are you grateful for at your church?
- 3. What are you grateful for in your own neighbourhood?
- 4. What is one specific thing in your life you are grateful for and why?
- 5. What is one specific person in your life you are grateful for and why?



Morning Reading | Lectio Divina

Read Luke 4:18-21, 1 Corinthians 10:23-24, Galatians 5:13-14

- What words or phrases jumped out at you as you read these texts?
- Why do you think the Holy Spirit drew your attention to these words or phrases?
- Where do you see the relationship between the texts and our time and place in the world?



Reflection

How has Christ Brought Freedom into Your Life?

In light of Jesus ushering in a new kingdom, a different way to rule, to lead and to live as

citizens in his kingdom, think about the following:

- In what way does Jesus' picture of freedom differ from the world's picture of freedom?
- What is at the very core of Jesus' gift of freedom? What is he actually freeing us from?
- How is he calling or inviting us as his followers to live into this freedom?
- What would we have to surrender in order to live this out?
- Do you believe that Jesus' Way is actually the way of freedom? Why or why not?



Bonus | Revisit Your Word for 2024

- Keep seeking if you have not yet received a word from the Lord.
- If you sense you have heard, what intrigues you about the word?
- If you are unsure whether the word is from the Lord, keep asking for affirmation.

Feast | How Will You Feast Today?

Spend some time allowing the Holy Spirit to guide you in mapping out what feasting could look like for you today. Think of people to do things with, places to go, activities to do and food to eat!

Rest | How Will You Rest Today?

Pay attention to your mind, body and soul. Ask yourself the following questions; Pay attention to your mind, body and soul. Ask yourself the following questions;

- Where do I feel fatigue? Unsettled? Discontent? Anxious?
- What does my body need today? (Exercise, rest, sleep...)
- What do I need to fill my mind with today? (Read a good book, listen to uplifting music, podcasts, scripture)



Evening Prayers | **Examen**

As you come to the end of the day, reflect on where you have experienced Jesus' presence, power and pleasure in your day. Record these in your journal.

- What was life giving today? What brought you joy?
- Were you able to practice loving others today? What did this look like?
- What was challenging today?
- Where did you go your own way today instead of following Jesus? Take time to ask forgiveness.
- Where did you see God at work?
- What do you need to surrender to him?

Holy Spirit,
Awaken my soul
Move in my life
Renew my heart and my mind
May my life bring glory to you
Bless Your holy name

Amen

Saturday





Morning Prayers | Psalm 16:9-1 (NIV)

Take a few moments to pray this Psalm over your day, thanking the Lord for his presence, protection and path of life.

Therefore my heart is glad and my tongue rejoices;
my body also will rest secure,
because you will not abandon me to the realm of the dead,
nor will you let your faithful one see decay.
You make known to me the path of life;
you will fill me with joy in your presence,
with eternal pleasures at your right hand.

Practicing Gratitude

- 1. What is something Jesus has done in the world or in your life that you are grateful for?
- 2. What are you grateful for at your church?
- 3. What are you grateful for in your own neighbourhood?
- 4. What is one specific thing in your life you are grateful for and why?
- 5. What is one specific person in your life you are grateful for and why?



Morning Reading | A Royal Priesthood Video

Another video day to "watch" our Bible reading! You will find the link below. It is approximately 5 minutes in duration. Get out your pen and be ready to take notes on what stands out to you in the videos. Write down any questions you may have so you can bring these questions to your Mission Group or discipleship partner.

ROYAL PRIESTHOOD

Link

Scan the QR code with phone camera, or click on the code.



Reflection

Just as we can follow the story of the Messiah from the beginning of the Bible to the end, we can also track the theme of a Royal Priesthood right from the beginning to the end of the Bible.

- How does this give you new insight into the Story of God, how he loves his people and how this affects us living here and now?
- How does the coming of Jesus as King and Royal Priest change the trajectory of the lives of those who follow him? What renewed role do we have in the kingdom of God?
- What part does the Holy Spirit play in our lives as participate with God in his kingdom and the restoration of the world?



Bonus

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- What do you need to surrender to him?

Holy Spirit,
Awaken my soul
Move in my life
Renew my heart and my mind
May my life bring glory to you
Bless Your holy name

Amen

The Advent and Christmas season is now drawing to a close. As you look to the new year in anticipation of what God is doing in the world and is inviting you to participate with him, pray the following prayer over 2024.

CLOSING PRAYER

King Jesus,

As this day and this year draw to a close,
I look back with thanksgiving for your presence in the world and in my life.
I praise you for another year, whether difficult or smooth.
Forgive me for the times or seasons I was not present with you
And for the times I went my own way rather than yours.
Thank you for your grace and compassion on me with my shortcomings.
And now I look ahead to the year to come,
I ask your grace and blessing over the next year.
I ask for your direction in life and that your path would be clear.
I pray healing over your church, over the world, and over my own life.
I pray your kingdom come and your will be done in this world.
As your humble servant, I ask for your blessing on my life, in my ministry and that the power of your Holy Spirit would guide and direct me.
No matter what unfolds this year, I look ahead with hope that you are King.
In your holy name,

Amen

THANK YOU FOR JOURNEYING THROUGH THE HOLY SEASON OF ADVENT WITH US AT FORGE CANADA.

WE PRAY GOD'S RICHEST BLESSINGS OVER YOU IN 2024!