

Additional Readings

Please note: This Sunday continues the season of Advent. This is the traditional season of preparation for Christmas. The following passages are selected around the nativity story. The Study Guide readings allow you to dig deeper.

Monday, December 22 – Read *Isaiah 11:1-10*. The prophet Isaiah paints a word picture of the day when the messiah will rule the earth. In this day all things will be turned upside down. This upside down creation will have no war or suffering. This will be a glorious day. In what ways are you inviting the messiah into your life?

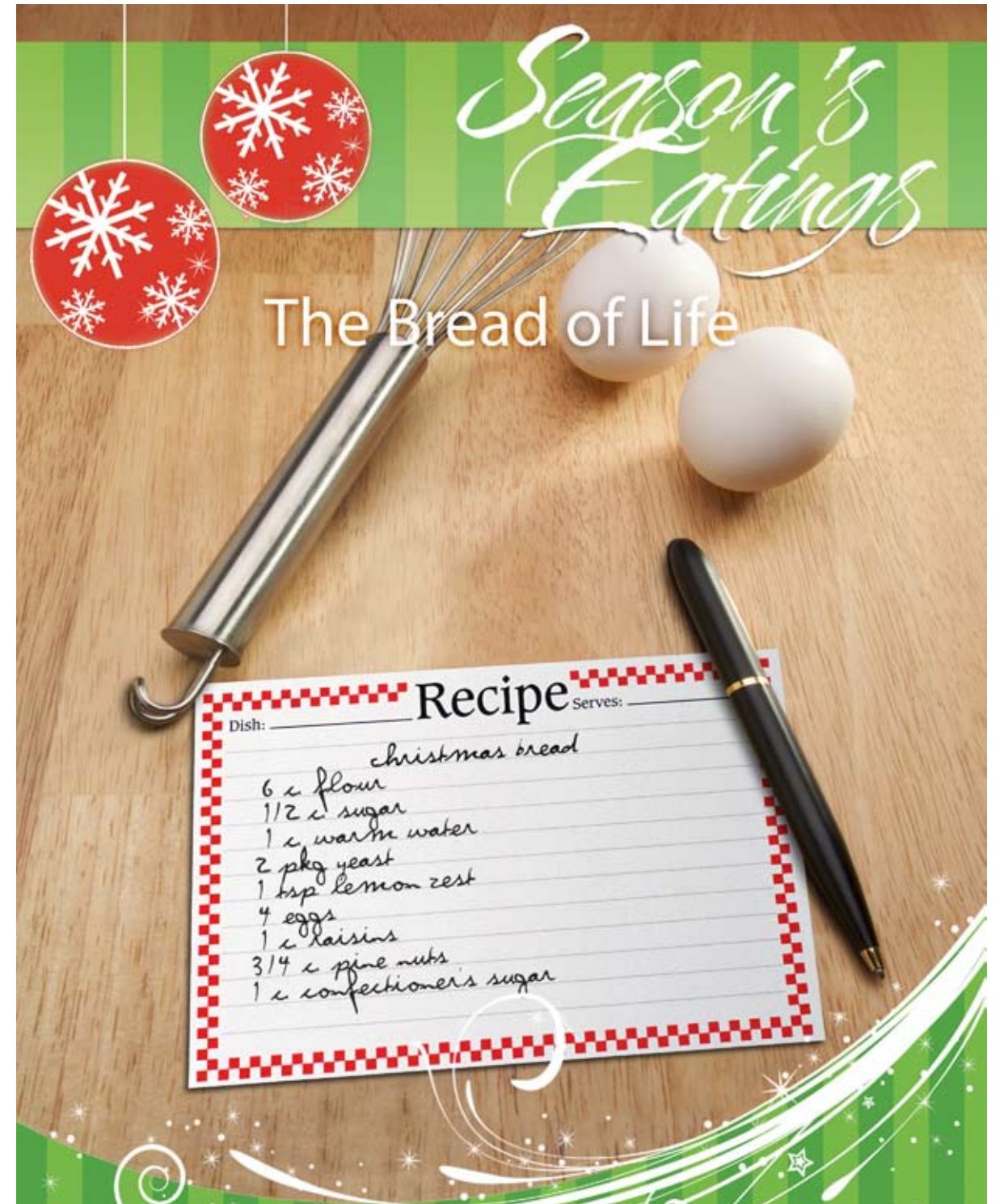
Tuesday, December 23 – Read *Luke 1:26-38*. Luke shares with us the angel's visit to Mary to inform her of her pregnancy and the impending birth of the messiah Jesus. Verses 37 and 38, "For nothing will be impossible with God." Then Mary said, "Here am I, the servant of the Lord; let it be with me according to your word." What challenges are you facing in your life this holiday season? Can you dedicate them to God? Can you allow God to use you to bring the Christ into the world?

Wednesday, December 24 – Read *John 1:46-56*. This passage is commonly known as the "Song of Mary" or the "Magnificat". Here Mary praises God for what God has decided to do through her. Her description of the Savior is the subject for poets and song writers through the ages. Mary will face ridicule for her pregnancy, but she understands what God is doing and is willing to endure the shame for the promise of the messiah. Are you willing to face hardship for God? What challenges are you facing right now? In your prayer time today, invite God to use this difficult situation to bring glory.

Thursday, December 25 – Read *Luke 2:1-20*. This is the story of Jesus birth. In Luke's account we hear the story of angels and shepherds. Read this passage out loud before your main meal today. Let the words sink into your soul. Pray for the coming of the Christ child into your life, your family, our church, and our world this day.

Friday, December 26 – Read *Matthew 1:18-2:12*. Matthew tells the story of Jesus' birth from Joseph's perspective. In his account, we hear about the wise men who come from other nations and cultures to worship the new king. In the days following Christmas, what gifts can you offer to Jesus the King? Are you willing to follow him every day in every way?

Please join us for any of our four services on Christmas Eve
4 p.m. Children & Families Worship with the Psalms Children's Choirs
7 & 9 p.m. Traditional Candlelight with the Trietsch Choir, Orchestra & Bells
11 p.m. Contemporary Candlelight Service with Reign band
Childcare at 4, 7 & 9 p.m. for ages 2 and under





Season's Eatings

Study Guide for December 21, 2008

TRIETSCH

John 6:35-40

The Word from the Bible (The Message)

Jesus said to them, "I am the bread of life; he who comes to Me will not hunger, and he who believes in Me will never thirst. But I said to you that you have seen Me, and yet do not believe. All that the Father gives Me will come to Me, and the one who comes to Me I will certainly not cast out. For I have come down from heaven, not to do My own will, but the will of Him who sent Me. This is the will of Him who sent Me, that of all that He has given Me I lose nothing, but raise it up on the last day. For this is the will of My Father, that everyone who beholds the Son and believes in Him will have eternal life, and I Myself will raise him up on the last day."

I am the Bread of Life (from the Interpreter's Bible Dictionary)

Since the earliest form of the Lord's Supper involved the "breaking of bread," worship in general came to be called by the same phrase (Acts 2:42, 46; 20:7). Elsewhere in the New Testament, however, bread is used metaphorically only in reference to the coming kingdom of God or to Jesus himself. One of Jesus' dinner companions refers to the messianic banquet when he says: "Blessed is he who shall eat bread in the kingdom of God" (Luke 14:16). And the Christian proclaims the Lord's death until he comes, whenever he partakes of the bread and cup of the Lord's Supper (1 Cor. 11:26).

More significant than these, however, is Jesus' designation of himself as "true bread." The disciples had referred to manna as "bread from heaven" given by God (Exod. 16:4; Neh. 9:15; etc.). Jesus then calls himself the "true bread from heaven" sent by his Father to give life to the world; the disciples ask that they be given this bread always (John 6:31-33). Thereupon Jesus strengthens his claim; he is the "bread of life," and those who follow him will never hunger or thirst (John 6:35). Finally, after a protest from the Jews, Jesus declares that those who "eat of this bread" will live forever, and that this bread is his own flesh (John 6:48-51; 4:13-15).

There are unmistakable references to the coming Last Supper in the narrative; the following verses (6:52-57) make this clear. But Jesus is also referring to his sacrificial death, particularly in 6:51. The mention of manna as an ordinary food is intended to show the superiority of Jesus to the law. For the expression "daily bread," see Lord's Prayer.

John 6:35-40

The theme of verses 27-71 in chapter 6 are the words from Jesus, I am the bread of life. John elaborates the true meaning of the feeding of the five thousand, which the people have misunderstood. While the followers of Jesus focus on the miracle of the multiplication of food, John points to the identity of Jesus as the true sustainer for all of life – the bread of life.

The passage for this Sunday comes from a larger discourse in 6:27-40. This larger section has close parallels with the conversation with the Samaritan woman in chapter 4, the symbol of bread here being comparable to the symbol of water there. The bread given in the miracle of feeding, as well as the manna given to God's people in the wilderness, is perishable, sufficing only for the day. It cannot give life to the world much less eternal life. But the bread to which Jesus refers is bread that will not perish. Jesus is the bread of life. Anyone who eats from this will never hunger again. Bread that we bake is like the things of this world – all is only temporary. Jesus as the bread of life is eternal.

Jewish writers and teachers had all used the manna as a type of life in the world to come. Now this true bread, this word of God, this heavenly food, this life raised up at the last day is revealed. And faith in him is fulfillment in doing the will and the work of God. Note that in John's gospel such matters as faith and truth are not abstract; they are positive commitment, action, and obedience.

Christmas Bread

Good cooks are familiar with the ingredients for bread. The usual ingredients include water, sugar, salt, vegetable oil, flour, and yeast. The "Bread of Life" defined in John 6 is very different. Jesus is the only ingredient needed for this bread. He is the "Bread of Life" that is eternal. Nothing else compares or substitutes.

The ingredients for a good life are a little more challenging. Our society defines a good life in terms of security, prosperity, health, and relationships. All these are vital ingredients, but they are just as fleeting as life itself.

As followers of the one true "Bread of Life" that is Jesus the Christ, we define life in different terms—eternal terms. We look instead for love, inner peace and joy. These ingredients can not be taken away by the events or circumstances of this world.

'Twas The Night Before Jesus Came

by Dianne Frances Donenfeld

'Twas the night before Jesus came
And all through the house

Not a creature was praying, not one in the house.

Their Bibles were lain on the shelf without care,

In hopes that Jesus would not come there.

The children were dressing to crawl into bed,
not once ever kneeling or bowing a head.

And Mom in her rocker with baby on her lap,
Was watching The Late Show while I took a nap.

When out of the East there arose such a clatter,
I sprang to my feet to see what was the matter.

Away to the window I flew like a flash,

Tore open the shutters and threw up the sash!
When what to my wondering eyes should appear

But angels proclaiming that Jesus was here.

With a light like the sun sending forth a bright ray,
I knew in a moment that this must be The Day.

The light of His face made me cover my head;

It was Jesus! Returning just like he said.

And though I possessed worldly wisdom and wealth,
I cried when I saw Him in spite of myself.

In the Book of Life which He held in His hand

Was written the name of every saved man.

He spoke not a word as He searched for my name,
When He said "It's not here" my head hung in shame.

The people whose names had been written with love
He gathered to take to His Father above.

With those who were ready He rose without a sound
While all the rest were left standing around.

I fell to my knees, but it was too late;

I had waited too long and thus sealed my fate.

I stood and cried as they rose out of sight;

Oh, if only I had been ready tonight.

In the words of this poem the meaning is clear;

The coming of Jesus is drawing near.

There's only one life and when comes the last call,

We'll find that the Bible was true after all!

The Real Meaning of Christmas

by Joseph P. Martino

Two thousand years ago the King of Kings was born.

'The Lamb of God' later made to feel the thorn,

If his words are accepted and not scorned,

They will make us all reborn.

Though God's grace, Joseph and Mary presented
A gift to the world that day, which we can all repay,
by living the ten commandments each and every day.

Try to remember and keep in your heart and mind

Jesus's gospel while here on Earth,

Redemption not a life lived in constant mirth.

Peace on Earth, good will toward man

Everyone should try it, whenever they can.

The Lord gave us the option and choice of 'free will,'
Now it's up to us to fit the bill.

So when you're Christmas shopping
for family and friends,

and money is tight at both ends,

Remember that the greatest gift of all,

Is your love of Jesus in the manger stall.