



The MBPC Texter

... get into scripture – an ancient form of text messaging

Mountain Brook Presbyterian Church Birmingham, Alabama

Issue 1

Lectionary Year C



Sunday, December 16th

3rd Sunday of Advent 2018

The following texts have been chosen by Pastor Lant Davis from this Sunday’s Revised Common Lectionary readings (<https://lectionary.library.vanderbilt.edu//>). When you have a few minutes before Sunday, look them up and read them.

Reading from Old Testament Prophets
Zephaniah 3:14-20 (sermon text)

New Testament Epistle Reading
Philippians 4:4-7

Learn more about Advent banners and Advent candles; the prophets; the epistles (letters); the book of Zephaniah; and Paul’s letter to the Philippians.

- Advent from A to Z (for Zephaniah)
- Zephaniah: A Prophet Writing in Bad Times for the Israelites
- Paul Rejoices in his Epistle to the Philippians
- Introducing Children to the Old Testament Prophets and New Testament Epistles





Advent from A to Z (for Zephaniah)

Happy New Year! Last Sunday, December 9, we celebrated Advent New Year at MBPC, beginning with our annual Christmas pageant during worship and ending with lunch and a Christmas craft workshop in our Fellowship Hall. Now, you may still be wondering why we chose to celebrate a new year in early December, but for many Christians, the first Sunday in Advent marks the beginning of the *liturgical year*. “Advent” is a Latin word which means coming, and during this season, Christians all over the world celebrate the mystery of our God, creator of the universe, being born to Mary in Bethlehem as a helpless infant. During the four Sundays of Advent at Mountain Brook Presbyterian Church, our worship practices include the hanging of banners and the lighting of Advent candles. Each banner reminds us of things we are to do during the Advent season: watch; prepare; rejoice; and behold. The lighting of a candle each week – candles of hope, peace, joy, and love – reminds us of the spiritual blessings Jesus renews for us in our hearts each year during this Advent season. I hope this table helps you to remember the significance of our seasonal banners and candles.

Sundays	Banners	Candles
1 st Sunday of Advent December 2, 2018	Watch Look back to the first Christmas 2000 years ago, when Jesus was born to a young Israelite virgin; watch today for Emmanuel – God among us; and look forward in the future to the “great day of the Lord” and glimpses of God’s kingdom.	Hope The lighting of this first candle can bring to mind the hope of God’s plan for good in the world; the hope God’s steadfast and enduring love; and the hope of God’s everlasting mercies.
2 nd Sunday of Advent December 9, 2018	Prepare Let us prepare the way for Jesus to enter our lives and to light our paths through the darkness of this world.	Peace We need peace in our lives, homes, communities, and the world. Help us slow down and seek the peace God provides.
3 rd Sunday of Advent December 16, 2018	Rejoice Let us rejoice as Mary rejoiced in her song, “My soul magnifies the Lord, and my spirit rejoices in God my savior; for he has looked with favor on the lowliness of his servant” (Luke 1:46-48).	Joy Each day, let us try to feel the joy surrounding us – in the squeeze of a hand, a smile, a song, or laughter.
4 th Sunday of Advent December 23, 2018	Behold In these final days before Christmas, help us behold Jesus as the light of the world and behold the miracle of his birth.	Love We love because God first loved us (1 John 4:19). In remembering how much God loves us, we share that love with each other.

In worship on Christmas Eve, we will light, along with these four, the 5th candle in the center of the Advent wreath – the Christ candle. We will also read from the Gospel according to John:

*And the Word became flesh and lived among us,
and we have seen his glory as of a father’s only son,
full of grace and truth (John 1:14)*



Zephaniah: A Prophet Writing in Bad Times for the Israelites

During the Advent season, not only do the Lectionary scriptures frequently come from gospel passages about Jesus' birth, but also from Old Testament prophets. The prophecies most frequently prophecies indicating a coming messiah are from Isaiah, including Isaiah 9 and Isaiah 11. This week's passage is from the writings of the prophet Zephaniah, who lived about the middle of the seventh century (650 B.C.) over 600 years before Jesus was born. These were bad times for the Israelites. Corruption, injustice, and ungodliness were rampant in both the political and religious leadership of Jerusalem. The glory years (1000 – 900 B.C.) were long past. These were the years when King David united all of the tribes of Israel into one nation and his son Solomon built the magnificent temple on Mt. Zion. Like the other prophets, Zephaniah laments and predicts God's judgment but not a judgment void of promise and hope. Zephaniah's prophecies, like Isaiah's, envision a return of leadership by a just Israelite ruler in Jerusalem. Sunday's reading is a song of joy that closes the book of Zephaniah, a fitting choice for the third Sunday of Advent:

*Sing aloud, O daughter Zion; shout, O Israel!
Rejoice and exult with all your heart,
O daughter Jerusalem!*



Paul Rejoices in his Letter to the Philippians

Philippi was a Roman colony in the province of Macedonia, and according to Acts 16:11-40, Paul along with Timothy, Silas, and others had visited this city around the year 50 A.D. The church Paul founded there was his first on European soil. Paul had a special love for the Christians at Philippi. Although it is uncertain when and where this letter was written, we know that he wrote it from prison. Although Paul was imprisoned on numerous occasions in numerous cities during his traveling ministry, he never gave up or turned away from God. Philippians is an appropriate scripture passage for the third Sunday of Advent because joy is the principal theme of the letter with words expressing joy occurring 16 times. This week's reading begins as follows:

Rejoice in the Lord always; and again I say Rejoice (Philippians 4:4).





Introducing Children to the Old Testament Prophets and the New Testament Letters



This week's two scriptures for Sunday's worship, Zephaniah 3:14-20 and Philippians 4:4-7, come from books in the prophets and the epistles sections of the Bible. Throughout the Fall of 2018, children have had fun learning the names of Bible books in the different sections. We have been playing Bible-book bingo and singing a song that we found on a YouTube video (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=L2P-qgCXIXo>) naming all the books of the Bible.

Ask your children if they can name the following:

- The first five books of the Old Testament: Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy
- The first five books of the New Testament – the four gospels (Matthew, Mark, Luke, John), followed by Acts, Luke's continuing story of Jesus' life and the early church

However, memorizing lists for the Old Testament prophets and the New Testament epistles are much more of a challenge. Here is a table for helping children learn the names of these books. Now, I agree with what you may be thinking that names like "Zephaniah" and "Philippians" are mighty big words. Even so, if children can learn and get excited about the words "brontosaurus" and "triceratops," then why can't they do the same with Bible names?

Major Prophets (longest books)	The Twelve	Pauline Epistles	General Epistles & Revelation
1. Isaiah 2. Jeremiah 3. Lamentations 4. Ezekiel 5. Daniel	1. Hosea 2. Joel 3. Amos 4. Obadiah 5. Jonah 6. Micah 7. Nahum 8. Habakkuk 9. Zephaniah 10. Haggai 11. Zechariah 12. Malachi	Romans 1 Corinthians 2 Corinthians Galatians Ephesians Philippians Colossians 1 Thessalonians 2 Thessalonians <i>Pastoral Epistles</i> • 1 Timothy • 2 Timothy • Titus Philemon	Hebrews James 1 Peter 2 Peter 1 John 2 John 3 John Jude Revelation

On Rally Day Sunday, September 9, 2018, first graders of our church were presented with *The Children's Bible in 365 Stories*, by Mary Batchelor. Although these stories are not the appropriate reading level for most first graders to read on their own, this book can serve as a great refresher for adults and also provide background for reading other Bible story books to children; telling the stories in our own words; and answering our children's Bible questions. Below are the names of stories connected to scripture passages from the Old Testament Prophets and New Testament Epistles sections.

Connections to the Prophets:

- Isaiah: "Isaiah's Vision" (#188, p. 215); "Keep Calm" (#189, p.215)
- Jeremiah: "Don't Send Me" (#195, p 223-4)
- Ezekiel: "Dry Bones Come Alive" (#216, p.248)
- Hosea: "Please Come Back" (#187, p. 214-15)
- Amos: "Swindlers and Robbers" (#186, p. 212-13)
- Malachi: "My Messenger is Coming" (# 237, p. 271-2)

Connections to the Epistles

- Philippians: "Letters from Paul" (#360, p. 407)
- Philemon: "The Runaway Slave" (#361, p. 408-9)
- Hebrews: "Letter to Jewish Christians" (#362, p. 409)
- James: "Letter from James" (#363, p. 410)
- 1st & 2nd Peter: "Letters from Peter" (#364, p. 411)

