

Shiloh Notes and News December 2025

A Word From the Pastor

“Do not be afraid. I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people.” Luke 2:10

Every December, we enter what feels like two Christmases happening at the same time. There is the Christmas of Scripture: A manger. A weary young mother. A bewildered yet faithful carpenter. A star cutting through the midnight sky. Angels singing to shepherds. A Savior wrapped in humility, not gold.

And then there is the Christmas of our culture: Commercials. Deadlines. Wish lists. Crowded stores. Sales, discounts, and overnight shipping. Traffic, exhaustion, and pressure to make everything “perfect.”

One is quiet, holy, and steady. The other is loud, hurried, and anxious. Most of us live somewhere between the tension of the two.

What if we took a deep breathe, slowed down, and refocused our hearts on the presence of Christ in the midst of a commercialized world.

The angel’s announcement to the shepherds of “good news of great joy” cut through their ordinary lives. Their world, like ours, was full of financial pressures, political tensions, and daily survival. But heaven’s first Christmas message didn’t focus on what they needed to purchase or prepare – it focused on who had come to save them: “Today in the city of David a Savior is born to you; He is Christ the Lord.”

The world says *buy more*, but the gospel says *receive what has already been given*.

The world says *you don’t have enough*, but Christ says *I am enough*.

The world says *make Christmas impressive*, but God says *I entered the world unnoticed*.

The true gift of Christmas isn’t found under a tree – it hung on a cross and walked out of a tomb.

I feel like we’ve pretty much already lost Thanksgiving; it’s merely a formality at this point. If it wasn’t for Halloween putting up a fight, *Sparkle Season* ads would start showing up just after Independence Day. Commercialism doesn’t usually show up with a billboard announcing, “I’m here to distract you from Jesus.” Instead, it slips in quietly, saying things like, “You need a little more to make the holiday special.” or “Your home must look a certain way.” or “Your gifts must prove your love.” or “Your celebration must be picture perfect.” And before long, the season that should refresh our souls begins draining them. I can somehow hear Charlie Brown exclaiming, “Isn’t there anyone who knows what Christmas is all about?”

Don’t get me wrong, there’s nothing wrong with giving gifts. And if you want to be able to land helicopters with the number of lights on your house, that’s cool. I love nothing more than

taking a drive to look at the beautiful lights of the season. The danger comes when these things take center stage – the place where only Christ belongs. In the midst of it all, maybe we should stop and ask ourselves: Does my celebration revolve around Christ, or does Christ revolve around my celebration?

The very humility of Christ confronts the excess of Christmas. Consider the striking contrast:

The King of Kings entered the world in poverty, not prosperity.

His birth was announced outdoors to shepherds, not indoors to royalty.

He was placed in a feed trough, not a gilded cradle.

Nothing about the first Christmas was glamorous, but everything about it was glorious.

Jesus came in simplicity so we could see him clearly.

He came in poverty so he could reach us personally.

He came in humility so we could follow him honestly.

Commercialism says, *More!*

The gospel says, *Less is enough when Christ is present.*

One of the most countercultural things a Christian can do during Christmas is slow down. Not everything must be bought. Not every event (unless it's at church) must be attended. Not every expectation must be met. The shepherds were not rushing when the angels appeared – they were simply present, awake, and available. And because their hearts were open, they were the first to hear heaven rejoice. We, too, might hear God more clearly in the quiet places. The Savior who came quietly still speaks quietly.

What can the modern-day Christian do to push back a little against the commercialism that has taken over this sacred holiday and come closer to Jesus?

Practice generosity toward the unnoticed: a neighbor, a shelter, a struggling family.

Build traditions that center on Scripture, not spending.

Give presence instead of presents: conversations, prayers, hospitality.

Share Bible stories of God's faithfulness with your children or loved ones.

Create a quiet space to worship, reflect, and rest before the Lord.

When Jesus is at the center, Christmas becomes not something we survive – but something that revives us.

However you choose to celebrate, Joyce and I wish you a very Merry Christmas. We are excited to be here and enjoy this season with you all.

Merry Christmas and God Bless You,
Pastor Fred

Activities and Announcements

Friday 12/5 – 5-9pm - Christmas in Climax – Tree Lighting 7:15pm

Sunday 12/7 - Blessing of the Christmas Cards

Toys for Tots – Please bring your donations by 12/7

Sunday 12/14 - 7:30am – MM Breakfast

Sunday 12/14 – Christmas Caroling - meet at the church at 2:30pm to go caroling followed by hot chocolate and cookies at the church around 5:00pm.

Sunday 12/21 – 5:00pm - Methodist Men Dinner followed by Christmas program in the Fellowship Hall

Please join us for:

Sunday School - 9:45 am

Worship Service – 11:00am

Bible Study – Tuesday's 7:00pm

Methodist Men's Breakfast – 2nd Sunday of each month

Mission Minutes: Thanks to everyone for the continued donations to the Julian Food Pantry. This is greatly appreciated! For the **December** distribution we are collecting **Canned Fruit and Canned Meat**.

There is a box provided at church for these items.

An Inescapable Date



We celebrate Christ's birth by referring to it in the date placed on all our coins, civil records and vital documents. It is inscribed upon metal and written on parchment and engraved on the cornerstones of great buildings. It is on every newspaper, every check, every deed, and it is universally acknowledged at the beginning of a new life.

Every human transaction is related to the birth of Christ. It cannot be avoided or evaded. God has seen to it that this event is more widely advertised than anything on earth that is or that ever has been.

—Dr. Walter Wilson

His Many Names, Our Great Hope

Long before the manger in Bethlehem, the prophet Isaiah pointed God's people to the promise of a Savior. In Isaiah 9:6 (NIV) we read: "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."

Even before Jesus' birth, his names revealed who he is and what he would bring. Each title carries a promise that still impacts our lives today.

Wonderful Counselor. Jesus brings wisdom and guidance for every situation. In moments of confusion, we can lean on him to direct our steps with love and truth.

Mighty God. He is strong enough to carry our burdens and powerful enough to overcome sin, fear and death itself.

Everlasting Father. Jesus reflects the heart of God the Father, offering care that is constant and unchanging. His love doesn't fade with time or circumstance.

Prince of Peace. In a world filled with turmoil, Jesus offers a peace that goes deeper than circumstances, a peace that guards our hearts and minds.

At Christmas, we celebrate more than a baby's birth. We celebrate the fulfillment of God's promise, a Savior with many names. Each one reminds us of his eternal love and presence. This season, let his names bring you comfort, strength and peace.

Christmas Prayer: The True Gift

Dear Lord,

You have brought us to Christmastime once more. Help us not to get lost in the glitter and the glow, but to see the true glory of the birth of Your only begotten Son. Keep our hearts from clinging too tightly to parties, presents and decorations, and turn our eyes instead to Christ — who bears Your very image and brings us Your message of love and hope.

In the glorious name of Christ, we pray. Amen.