

Christmas Eve

CANDLELIGHT SERVICE

—

SUN, DEC 24



HOUSTON'S FIRST
BAPTIST CHURCH

THE LOOP • CYPRESS • DOWNTOWN • SIENNA



*Our yearly trip to see Santa at one of the malls in Houston!
— Pastor Gregg Matte*



*Excited to receive my first bike when I was six!
— Jakora Snow, Downtown*

Preparing for Christmas can often feel like putting together a puzzle. While many puzzle-builders often spend days or even weeks on a puzzle, you've probably spent weeks preparing for tomorrow's big day. Decorating the house, ordering Christmas cards, and wrapping presents are most likely checked off your list, but have you made time to intentionally dwell on the true meaning of Christmas? Amidst the busyness, have you spent unhurried time with those you love?

If you've been journeying with Houston's First this December, you'll know that as a church we've been reading a chapter of Luke every day. From December 1-24, we've read the entire gospel story and prepared our hearts for celebrating Jesus' birth. Whether you're here today in glad anticipation of tomorrow or feeling weary and wishing you could go back to a former Christmas when life just seemed easier, there is hope! Jesus coming to the world is not just for December 25, it's for every other day of the year, too! Hold on to that truth today and let it carry you through whatever season of life you find yourself in.

Merry Christmas!
Houston's First Staff

Check out these Christmas memories from our staff!

This was the first Christmas after my father gave his life to Christ. The focus of our holiday moved from Santa to Jesus. My father has passed away but is celebrating Christmas daily as he's rejoicing with the King of Kings! — Mon'Sher Spencer, Sienna



This was a toy I REALLY wanted and thought I wasn't going to get. — Roger Cullins, Cypress

Merry Christmas!

Like returning to the place you boarded an amazing amusement park ride, we are back to Luke 1, where we began. Our hair is blown back, and our smile can't be wiped off. Stories of wow and awe astound us, bringing both contemplation and joy. What a journey we've been on together, and we'll end at the beginning: the first Christmas Day.

Our path has taken us from December 1 to December 24, through the twenty-four chapters of the Gospel of Luke. Now we land at the day we have been looking forward to: Christmas Day! It is finally here. We've been waiting, shopping, hoping, praying for this day. Yippee, the calendar says December 25.

Gifts, food, fun, family, friends, and football await. What a day! No one is expecting return emails or attention toward solving pending problems. The office is closed and the schools are empty. So, what should we do with such a glorious, holy, and significant day?

Let's follow Mary's example step-by-step.

And Mary said: "My soul praises the greatness of the Lord." Luke 1:46

- **My soul** — Mary speaks from the deepest and eternal part of her. The soul is the part of us that only God can cleanse and touch. From the depths of our soul come true praise and faith. This is the place we must start with God. He chose the color of our eyes and wants to use our hands, but deeper still He wants to own our souls. He wants us to live from our soul as well.
- **praises** — From depth of soul the highest worth is declared, and the deepest focus is given. How can we not praise Him? Look at all He has done in our lives. Praise is the strongest need of our heart and soul and most appropriate on Christmas Day.
- **the greatness** — Jesus is magnificent, incredible, high, and lifted up. What child is this who was born, lived, died, rose, saves, calls, heals, listens, cares, intercedes, and will return soon? It's God's only begotten Son. Jesus—the baby, the boy, the man, the crucified Savior—is the only reason for this season. Jesus is our great God, and today we celebrate that He came to earth for us.
- **of the Lord** — The good in my life and yours is not my doing, it's not your doing. It is not a gift of anyone on earth. Our lives are from Him and for Him. The breath in our lungs is "of the Lord." Therefore, it's all about the Lord every day. Especially today, Christmas Day. Give your life spiritually and practically to Him.

So today, on Christmas Day, let's eat too many side items and desserts, laugh until our face hurts, and enjoy the beautiful decorations and people we love. But don't miss it. Don't let the day go by without engaging your soul in praise of Jesus.

Learn from Mary, who was at the manger and the empty tomb. Praise God from the depths and sincerity of your soul for His greatness!

A sincere, glorious Merry Christmas, from my family to yours.

PRAYER — Lord, thank You for sending Jesus. Prophesied throughout the Old Testament and come to life in the New Testament. I'm grateful Jesus is the Savior of the world and also for little ole me. I'm forever grateful, especially on this Christmas Day, for Jesus' birth in Bethlehem and my new birth in Him!

Pastor Greasy