

The Coming King

Advent Devotional
and Journal

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Printed in the United States of America.

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DEDICATION

To all who long for His coming—

may the hope, peace, joy, and love of Jesus Christ, our King, fill
your hearts this Advent and always.



ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

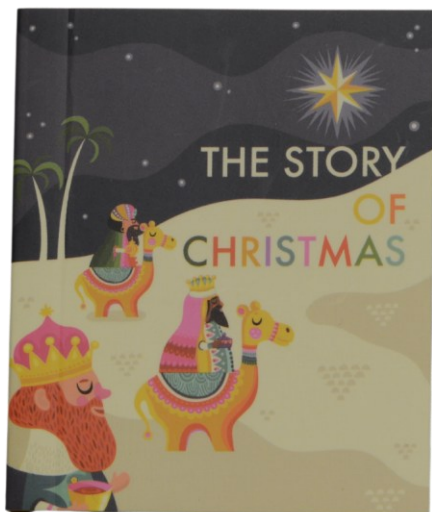
This devotional was written and illustrated by members and friends of St. Michael's Church who generously shared their gifts of faith, reflection, and artistry during the Advent and Christmas seasons. Each page bears witness to the living hope we have in Jesus Christ—our promised and coming King.

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With gratitude to **Shirley Veater** for her artistic vision and generosity in sharing the cover artwork, and to all who helped edit, design, and prepare this devotional for publication.

May every reader encounter Christ anew through these reflections and be drawn more deeply into His coming Kingdom.



God is Moving! Are You Ready?

Santa Claus—also known as St. Nicholas—is one of my favorite figures, both in fiction and in history. He appears as *Father Christmas* in C. S. Lewis's *The Chronicles of Narnia*, that frozen land where it is “always winter and never Christmas.” There, an ice queen has locked everything and everyone in a cold, grey stillness. God—known as Aslan in Narnia—seems distant.

Three children journey through that frozen world, searching for their brother who has been enchanted by the witch and is slowly giving away his soul for Turkish Delight. Along the road, they hear a sleigh approaching. Fearing it's the witch, they hide—only to discover something very different:

“On the sledge sat a person whom everyone knew the moment they set eyes on him. He was a huge man in a bright red robe (bright as holly berries) with a hood that had fur inside it, and a great white beard that fell like a foamy waterfall over his chest.

... Some of the pictures of Father Christmas in our world make him look only funny and jolly. But now that the children actually stood looking at him, they didn't find it quite like that. He was so big, and so glad, and so real, that they all became quite still. They felt very glad, but also solemn.

‘I've come at last,’ said he. ‘She has kept me out for a long time, but I have got in at last. Aslan is on the move. The Witch's magic is weakening.’ ”

Isaiah the prophet comes onto the stage of history in much the same way—bursting through the long silence with a proclamation that *God is on the move*. His words cut through the cold gloom of judgment and despair with the promise of a coming King—one who brings peace, renewal, joy, promise, and light. But before the warmth of redemption arrives, Isaiah calls us to prepare our hearts.

Advent begins in waiting, but it is not idle waiting. It is a holy readiness that examines the soul, repents of sin, and watches for signs of God's movement in a weary world.

We still live in that in-between time—the already and not yet. We experience conflict, decay, dryness of spirit, fear, and the long ache of waiting. The air feels thick with dread, like a Chicago winter that never seems to break. It has been millennia since Jesus promised to return as the reigning King, and yet we still wait. But Advent teaches us to wait differently—with expectation, hope, and holy imagination—because even when the cold lingers, *God is still moving*.

So, this season, take time each day to pause. Read Scripture. Reflect. Pray. Journal. The passages in this devotional are drawn from the Advent lectionary—the same readings proclaimed by Christians around the world as they prepare for the coming of Christ. And thirty-four of your fellow parishioners have written these reflections and provided prayers and journaling prompts to help you along the way. We give thanks for their offerings.

Some will comfort you, others will challenge you, and some will simply lift your gaze heavenward. Listen to their words as if they were sitting beside you. Let them stir your heart toward Jesus. And as you read, pray that the Witch's magic—the evil and despair of this world—would weaken, and that God would move mightily in your heart, in our church, and across the world.

Aslan is on the move. The King is coming.

Grace and Peace,
Greg+





Sunday, November 30, First Sunday in Advent

The Word of the Lord

Isaiah 2:1-5

¹The word that Isaiah the son of Amoz saw concerning Judah and Jerusalem.

²It shall come to pass in the latter days
that the mountain of the house of the Lord
shall be established as the highest of the mountains,
and shall be lifted up above the hills;
and all the nations shall flow to it,

³and many peoples shall come, and say:
“Come, let us go up to the mountain of the Lord,
to the house of the God of Jacob,
that he may teach us his ways
and that we may walk in his paths.”

For out of Zion shall go forth the law,
and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem.

⁴He shall judge between the nations,
and shall decide disputes for many peoples;
and they shall beat their swords into plowshares,
and their spears into pruning hooks;
nation shall not lift up sword against nation,
neither shall they learn war anymore.

⁵O house of Jacob,
come, let us walk
in the light of the Lord.

From Swords and Spears to Plowshares and Pruning Hooks

Isaiah 2:1-5

The Prophet Isaiah was one of the great “*Get Ready!*” prophets. He lived around 740 BC. Isaiah sounded a clear note to the Children of Israel. He said, “Come...” They had lost their way; the enemy was threatening to destroy them; they quit listening to God’s messengers. The people of God needed to hear some good news.

Through Isaiah, Almighty God said, “Come.” It was not a confusing message, just “Come...to the house of God.” Let Him “teach us His ways” so that we may “walk in his paths.” Then Isaiah reveals this great promise of hope and peace, “...they shall beat their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks...neither shall they learn war anymore.”

As we begin our Advent season at St. Michael’s Church, we hear the same prophetic message: “Come.” It is God’s fulfillment of Isaiah’s promise. “Advent” means “Coming.” The Prince of Peace is the Lord of All, and His Name is Jesus. He is absolutely capable of turning swords and spears into plowshares and pruning hooks.

Come to Him and receive His great gifts this Advent season and for the rest of your life.

~ Chaplain Charles C. Baldwin

Reflections

Are you ready?

[Open your journal book and write.]

Let Us Pray

Dear Lord Jesus, thank You for the invitation long ago to come to You. You are the Source of Peace. Come into our lives during this Advent Season. In Jesus, Name we pray. Amen.



Monday, December 1

The Word of the Lord

Psalm 122

- ¹I was glad when they said to me,
“Let us go to the house of the Lord!”
- ²Our feet have been standing
within your gates, O Jerusalem!
- ³Jerusalem—built as a city
that is bound firmly together,
⁴to which the tribes go up,
the tribes of the Lord,
as was decreed for Israel,
to give thanks to the name of the Lord.
- ⁵There thrones for judgment were set,
the thrones of the house of David.
- ⁶Pray for the peace of Jerusalem!
“May they be secure who love you!
- ⁷Peace be within your walls
and security within your towers!”
- ⁸For my brothers and companions' sake
I will say, “Peace be within you!”
- ⁹For the sake of the house of the Lord our God,
I will seek your good.

Glimpses of His Glory

Psalm 122

Psalm 122 is one of the Songs of Ascent, a song pilgrims would sing on their way to Jerusalem. It begins, “I was glad when they said to me, ‘Let us go to the house of the Lord.’” I can relate; I feel gladness about going to church. I feel it because I long to be in worship, but also because through the body of Christ, God gives us glimpses of His glory.

At church, God nudged me to pray with a friend and then moved mightily in that person’s life. He revealed not only His power to heal but also deepened my wonder at His willingness to work through our prayers.

At church, I heard the testimony of a family choosing to trust God despite a string of devastating events. They saw His hand at work amid their trials and grief. Through their story, I saw Him, too.

At church, I watch the long line of people approach the altar to receive the Eucharist. Young, old, and in-between, parents with babies in arms—as I watch them pass, I marvel at God’s faithfulness to all the generations.

And yet, these are just glimpses of God’s glory. Here we stand in Advent, celebrating the arrival of Christ who saves us. But we also await the time when these amazing glimpses will give way to the fullness of God’s glory, and, as the familiar song says, “*We will sing with our hearts restored. He has done great things, we will say together.*”

~ Ashley Frampton

Reflections

What glimpses of the kingdom has God given you recently?

[Open your journal book and write.]

Let Us Pray

Lord, we thank You for the church and the way You move and reveal Yourself among Your people. We thank You for Your faithfulness to all the generations. We ask You to open our eyes to Your hand at work today so that we might better know You and honor You in our lives. Amen.



Tuesday, December 2

The Word of the Lord

Romans 13:8-14

⁸Owe no one anything, except to love each other, for the one who loves another has fulfilled the law. ⁹For the commandments, “You shall not commit adultery, You shall not murder, You shall not steal, You shall not covet,” and any other commandment, are summed up in this word: “You shall love your neighbor as yourself.” ¹⁰Love does no wrong to a neighbor; therefore love is the fulfilling of the law.

¹¹Besides this you know the time, that the hour has come for you to wake from sleep. For salvation is nearer to us now than when we first believed. ¹²The night is far gone; the day is at hand. So then let us cast off the works of darkness and put on the armor of light. ¹³Let us walk properly as in the daytime, not in orgies and drunkenness, not in sexual immorality and sensuality, not in quarreling and jealousy. ¹⁴But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to gratify its desires.

Wake Up!

Romans 13:8-14

Isaiah's words to Israel of the coming of the Lord's Messiah were forgotten by most prior to the birth of Jesus. His actual arrival was missed by most except for those to whom angels announced to at His birth and to Anna and Simeon to whom God revealed His son at Jesus' presentation by His parents at the temple soon after his birth. Others completely missed His birth and were asleep to its significance.

Here in Romans, Paul is writing to people he is concerned are also asleep, this time with regard to the Lord's return. Paul calls us "to wake from sleep"(v11). He urges Christian conduct such as love for each other and for demonstrable behavior that sets Christians apart from the world around them, and which the world longs to experience and the Lord's return will bring about in a new kingdom.

Although Christians are never without fault, we are called to live lives that demonstrate the kingdom that is to come and invites those outside to be a part of. When we do this well, we make it easier for people to become a part of it and who will eagerly await our Lord's return with us.

~ George Klein

Reflections

How are you reflecting the new kingdom Jesus is bringing?

[Open your journal book and write.]

Let Us Pray

Holy Spirit, give me strength and guide me to better represent You to the watching world around me, that others will seek You and Your kingdom. Amen.



Wednesday, December 3

The Word of the Lord

Matthew 24:29-44

²⁹ “But immediately after the tribulation of those days the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light, and the stars will fall from the sky, and the powers of the heavens will be shaken. ³⁰ And then the sign of the Son of Man will appear in the sky, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of the sky with power and great glory. ³¹ And He will send forth His angels with a great trumpet and they will gather together His elect from the four winds, from one end of the sky to the other.

³² “Now learn the parable from the fig tree: when its branch has already become tender and puts forth its leaves, you know that summer is near; ³³ so, you too, when you see all these things, recognize that He is near, *right* at the door. ³⁴ Truly I say to you, this generation will not pass away until all these things take place. ³⁵ Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will not pass away.

³⁶ “But of that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, nor the Son, but the Father alone. ³⁷ For the coming of the Son of Man will be just like the days of Noah. ³⁸ For as in those days before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noah entered the ark, ³⁹ and they did not understand until the flood came and took them all away; so will the coming of the Son of Man be. ⁴⁰ Then there will be two men in the field; one will be taken and one will be left. ⁴¹ Two women *will be* grinding at the mill; one will be taken and one will be left.

⁴² “Therefore be on the alert, for you do not know which day your Lord is coming. ⁴³ But be sure of this, that if the head of the house had known at what time of the night the thief was coming, he would have been on the alert and would not have allowed his house to be broken into. ⁴⁴ For this reason you also must be ready; for the Son of Man is coming at an hour when you do not think *He will*.

Are You Ready to Meet the Bridegroom?

Matthew 24:29-44

The night before I married Jeff, I had a dream that is perhaps a bride's worst nightmare. In the dream I had overslept and had to walk down the aisle with wet hair. If there is ever a time that you want to be ready—it's your wedding day.

There is a day coming when we will meet the Bridegroom, Jesus. The only one to know the day is God the Father. Do you have the appropriate outfit—have you exchanged your filthy rags for His robe of righteousness? The great exchange takes place when we repent of our sin and in faith receive new life in Him.

Just as in the days of Noah, there is a chilling scene in the Sight and Sound production of Noah—it's when you hear the heavy thud and realize God shut the door to the ark. You hear the people banging on the door and wailing as they are overwhelmed by the flood waters. Two questions come to mind from our reading: Are you safely on the ark, which represents salvation in Jesus? Are you faithful like Noah to proclaim the impending judgment of God and the provision of the ark (Jesus), despite the mocking and distractions of a wicked culture?

Let us be found ready with the robe of Christ's righteousness securely in place when we meet our Bridegroom. May we be faithful like Noah to encourage people to get on the ark—the hope and safety of salvation in Christ alone.

~ Karen Koob

Reflections

Are you ready to board the ark?

[Open your journal book and write.]

Let Us Pray

Father, thank You that we live in the age of grace where salvation is available to anyone who through repentance and faith comes to Jesus for new life. Give us a sense of urgency and Your love for the world that we would be faithful witnesses of Jesus. Make us willing like Noah to withstand the recrimination and obediently build Your kingdom. Pour out your grace that we would cooperate with the Holy Spirit to transform us into a radiant Bride, ready for the Bridegroom's return. Amen.



Thursday, December 4

The Word of the Lord

John 14:27

²⁷Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. Not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your hearts be troubled, neither let them be afraid.

Peace that Passes ALL Understanding

John 14:27

Have you ever wondered about the one life event that if it happened you could not endure? I recall imagining hardships or tragedies that might happen and those I could get through. There was one I did not believe I could endure. It happened.

An event that in an instant brought unimaginable sorrow and changed my life. I prayed hard. It seemed impossible that a sense of peace could be achieved.

Through the weeks to come, I asked for prayers from friends and family. I began to feel surrounded by a peace that truly passed all understanding.

A series of events that followed resulted in miraculous outcomes that quieted my worst fears. I felt covered in a peace that poured from the Holy Spirit and the “impossible” happened: Not only did I survive, I became stronger in my belief in the power of prayer along with an abiding peace that passes all understanding and endured.

During this advent season we look to the arrival of the author of that peace.

What greater gift could we ask for?

~ Mike Walker

Reflections

Imagining the “worst thing that could happen,” can you see yourself finding peace that passes all understanding?

[Open your journal book and write.]

Let Us Pray

Lord Jesus, we praise You for the gift of peace that always passes all understanding in all things at all times and in all places. Amen.



Friday, December 5

The Word of the Lord

Micah 4:1-4

¹It shall come to pass in the latter days
that the mountain of the house of the Lord
shall be established as the highest of the mountains,
and it shall be lifted up above the hills;
and peoples shall flow to it,
²and many nations shall come, and say:
“Come, let us go up to the mountain of the Lord,
to the house of the God of Jacob,
that he may teach us his ways
and that we may walk in his paths.”
For out of Zion shall go forth the law,
and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem.
³He shall judge between many peoples,
and shall decide disputes for strong nations far away;
and they shall beat their swords into plowshares,
and their spears into pruning hooks;
nation shall not lift up sword against nation,
neither shall they learn war anymore;
⁴but they shall sit every man under his vine and under his fig tree,
and no one shall make them afraid,
for the mouth of the Lord of hosts has spoken.

Come Let Us Go to the Mountain of the Lord

Micah 4:1-4

The Prophet gives us a glimpse of the hope that is ours now because of Jesus and that is to come with His return. These verses illustrate a time of peace where God is with us and will lead us in all our ways.

In the next chapter, Micah tells us that a ruler will come from the line of David born in Bethlehem.

As we meditate upon this passage, let us rejoice that the prophecy is fulfilled with the birth, death, and resurrection of Jesus. He secures our right relationship with God so that we can live in peace, follow His leading, and even be indwelt by His Holy Spirit.

Peace is found in His presence, no matter what the circumstances we face.

We also live in hope for God's promise of a world at peace where swords and spears are no longer needed, and nothing will make us afraid.

This future is guaranteed when Christ returns. We will live in that world because of Jesus who has secured for each of us a new and resurrected life!

~ Jeannie Lyles

Reflections

How are you living the fulfilled part of this prophecy, and what does this hope for the future mean to you?

[Open your journal book and write.]

Let Us Pray

Dear Jesus, help us to live in the hope of the guaranteed future of a new and resurrected life with your return. Amen.



Saturday, December 6

The Word of the Lord

Colossians 3:14-15

¹⁴And above all these put on love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony. ¹⁵And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in one body. And be thankful.

Seek Peace

Colossians 3:14-15

The early Christians in Colossae were learning to live in a multi-ethnic, diverse community. They came from Jewish, Gentile, Roman, and Greek backgrounds. They had to learn to unify under one faith in Christ.

It wasn't easy because there were serious social tensions. Paul was encouraging them to embrace their identity in Christ and live at peace with each other. He in effect was telling them to let Christ's peace govern decisions and resolve conflicts.

We too face a diverse culture filled with social tensions. Paul's teachings are just as relevant for us today. We need to embrace our identity in Christ, demonstrating our love and peace toward others so that the world will be attracted to Christ.

As Christ prayed to the Father, "I am praying not only for these disciples, but also for all who will ever believe in me through their message. I pray that they will all be one just as you and I are one... and may they be in us so the world will believe you sent me." (John 17: 20-21)

~ Bill Crothers

Reflections

How well are you seeking God's peace in this polarized and chaotic world?

[Open your journal book and write.]

Let Us Pray

Father, forgive me for not demonstrating Your love and peace especially for those with whom I disagree. Amen.



Sunday, December 7, Second Sunday in Advent

The Word of the Lord

Isaiah 11:1-10

¹There shall come forth a shoot from the stump of Jesse,
and a branch from his roots shall bear fruit.

²And the Spirit of the Lord shall rest upon him,
the Spirit of wisdom and understanding,
the Spirit of counsel and might,
the Spirit of knowledge and the fear of the Lord.

³And his delight shall be in the fear of the Lord.

He shall not judge by what his eyes see,
or decide disputes by what his ears hear,

⁴but with righteousness he shall judge the poor,
and decide with equity for the meek of the earth;
and he shall strike the earth with the rod of his mouth,
and with the breath of his lips he shall kill the wicked.

⁵Righteousness shall be the belt of his waist,
and faithfulness the belt of his loins.

⁶The wolf shall dwell with the lamb,
and the leopard shall lie down with the young goat,
and the calf and the lion and the fattened calf together;
and a little child shall lead them.

⁷The cow and the bear shall graze;
their young shall lie down together;
and the lion shall eat straw like the ox.

⁸The nursing child shall play over the hole of the cobra,
and the weaned child shall put his hand on the adder's den.

⁹They shall not hurt or destroy
in all my holy mountain;
for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord
as the waters cover the sea.

¹⁰In that day the root of Jesse, who shall stand as a signal for the peoples—of him shall the nations inquire, and his resting place shall be glorious.

The Spirit of the Lord on the Righteous King

Isaiah 11:1-10

The very first verses of Isaiah chapter 11 burst forth upon us with words of great hope:

A shoot will spring forth from the stem of Jesse

And a branch from his roots will bear fruit

Out of God's judgment in the closing verses of chapter 10, now comes the promise of new life through the One who is anointed and empowered by the Holy Spirit. This shoot of Jesse, who is Jesus, will be the ruler on earth we have always longed for—One who has perfect wisdom, justice, understanding and knowledge. He will bring judgment on the wicked and establish His Kingdom in which those who once lived in fear will now lie down in peace. No one will be hurt or destroyed in His Kingdom. Indeed, the rule of Jesus will be glorious and what we all long for!

For have we all not experienced in this life times when we have felt cut down to a mere stump as a victim of unrighteousness, the consequences of our own moral failure, loss of position, financial worries, health issues or broken relationships? If not for our hope in God's redemptive power, we may have given in to despair.

But as true believers, we cling to the glorious promise that when Jesus will return as King, He will make all things right. Who knows whether that day will come in our lifetime, but this we do know: When Jesus is Savior and King of our lives, His rule has already begun!

~ Michelle Hyer

Reflections

Does your hope and source of joy come from trusting Jesus to rule over all the circumstances in your life?

[Open your journal book and write.]

Let Us Pray

Lord Jesus, in the midst of our temporary tribulations, fears and pain, help us to live with joy and strength, empowered by the Holy Spirit, that Your Kingdom will be on earth in our lives as it is in heaven. Amen.



Monday, December 8

The Word of the Lord

Psalm 72

- ¹Give the king your justice, O God,
and your righteousness to the royal son!
²May he judge your people with righteousness,
and your poor with justice!
³Let the mountains bear prosperity for the people,
and the hills, in righteousness!
⁴May he defend the cause of the poor of the people,
give deliverance to the children of the needy,
and crush the oppressor!
- ⁵May they fear you while the sun endures,
and as long as the moon, throughout all generations!
⁶May he be like rain that falls on the mown grass,
like showers that water the earth!
⁷In his days may the righteous flourish,
and peace abound, till the moon be no more!
- ⁸May he have dominion from sea to sea,
and from the River to the ends of the earth!
⁹May desert tribes bow down before him,
and his enemies lick the dust!
- ¹⁰May the kings of Tarshish and of the coastlands
render him tribute;
may the kings of Sheba and Seba
bring gifts!
- ¹¹May all kings fall down before him,
all nations serve him!
- ¹²For he delivers the needy when he calls,
the poor and him who has no helper.
¹³He has pity on the weak and the needy,
and saves the lives of the needy.
- ¹⁴From oppression and violence he redeems their life,
and precious is their blood in his sight.
- ¹⁵Long may he live;
may gold of Sheba be given to him!
May prayer be made for him continually,
and blessings invoked for him all the day!
- ¹⁶May there be abundance of grain in the land;

on the tops of the mountains may it wave;
may its fruit be like Lebanon;
and may people blossom in the cities
like the grass of the field!

¹⁷May his name endure forever,
his fame continue as long as the sun!
May people be blessed in him,
all nations call him blessed!

¹⁸Blessed be the Lord, the God of Israel,
who alone does wondrous things.

¹⁹Blessed be his glorious name forever;
may the whole earth be filled with his glory!
Amen and Amen!

²⁰The prayers of David, the son of Jesse, are ended.

Petition, Power, Providence

Psalm 72

When's the last time you asked God to make you more powerful? I don't mean "overnight-Popeye with a Saint Michael's nametag." *Bruce Almighty* is fictional for a reason. Psalm 72 explores the concept of power correctly dispersed over a kingdom that is God-centered and God-driven.

Solomon's petition to God intertwines with some Christ-focused allegories. It's a beautiful cry out to God and a picture of Christ's reign all wrapped up in one. But what does it mean for us?

Take a current inventory of your domain and where your power lies. What are you responsible for at work? Who relies on you? What places do you frequently visit? Wrap a castle around your home, put chainmail on your favorite barista, reins on your SUV, a saddle on your dog. This is your kingdom. Now, let Christ move your boots.

What coworker has kind light in their eyes but gets pushed to the outskirts of the water cooler? *"May he defend the cause of the poor of the people."*

Which friend is suffering abuse from a spouse? *"From oppression and violence he redeems their life."*

How many kind words can you speak in a day? *"May people be blessed in him, all nations call him blessed."*

~ *Pruit Butler*

Reflections

How can you let God flood your domain and expand it?

[Open your journal book and write.]

Let Us Pray

God, please show me the areas of my kingdom that are dark and devoid of You. Give me the power and courage to drive out that darkness and fill it with light. And, when I am ready, expand my domain further. In Jesus' name I pray. Amen.



Tuesday, December 9

The Word of the Lord

Romans 15:4-9

⁴For whatever was written in former days was written for our instruction, that through endurance and through the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope. ⁵May the God of endurance and encouragement grant you to live in such harmony with one another, in accord with Christ Jesus, ⁶that together you may with one voice glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. ⁷Therefore welcome one another as Christ has welcomed you, for the glory of God.

⁸For I tell you that Christ became a servant to the circumcised to show God's truthfulness, in order to confirm the promises given to the patriarchs, ⁹and in order that the Gentiles might glorify God for his mercy. As it is written,

“Therefore I will praise you among the Gentiles,
and sing to your name.”

Endurance, Encouragement, and Hope

Romans 15:4-9

When we moved to Boston in 1995, the Red Sox were in the midst of an historic championship slump, filled with years of dashed hopes and dreams.

However, in 2004, the city was united as the Sox won a dramatic World Series. Even if you weren't a lifelong fan, you became one in 2004. We saw the hope of many years ending in joy.

How does one survive during the bad times? Paul tells the Romans that endurance and the encouragement of scripture will give us hope. Endurance can be hard, and studying scripture requires discipline. Hope can take work. But the result is a spirit of unity that will glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Paul goes on to add something else. We need to live in harmony with one another in order to bring praise to God. Jesus confirmed the promises of the patriarchs, which united Jew and Gentile through faith in Jesus.

In Jesus, there is hope and unity that overcomes human divisions.

~ Susan DiCamillo

Reflections

In a world that is split by history, faiths, politics, and more, what is your strategy to live in harmony with others?

[Open your journal book and write.]

Let Us Pray

Father God, thank You that You gave us a way to hope and unity through the person of Your son Jesus. Give us the endurance and encouragement to live harmoniously with others so that we may glorify You. Amen.



Wednesday, December 10

The Word of the Lord

Matthew 3:1-12

¹In those days John the Baptist came preaching in the wilderness of Judea, ²“Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.” ³For this is he who was spoken of by the prophet Isaiah when he said,

“The voice of one crying in the wilderness:

‘Prepare the way of the Lord;
make his paths straight.’”

⁴Now John wore a garment of camel's hair and a leather belt around his waist, and his food was locusts and wild honey. ⁵Then Jerusalem and all Judea and all the region about the Jordan were going out to him, ⁶and they were baptized by him in the river Jordan, confessing their sins.

⁷But when he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees coming to his baptism, he said to them, “You brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the wrath to come? ⁸Bear fruit in keeping with repentance.

⁹And do not presume to say to yourselves, ‘We have Abraham as our father,’ for I tell you, God is able from these stones to raise up children for Abraham. ¹⁰Even now the axe is laid to the root of the trees. Every tree therefore that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire.

¹¹“I baptize you with water for repentance, but he who is coming after me is mightier than I, whose sandals I am not worthy to carry. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire. ¹²His winnowing fork is in his hand, and he will clear his threshing floor and gather his wheat into the barn, but the chaff he will burn with unquenchable fire.”

Come to the Jordan

Matthew 3:1-12

At an Advent Sunday service, at St. Paul's Episcopal Church, in Cleveland Heights, Ohio, approximately 25 years ago, part of this Scripture was acted out.

I was in one of the back pews on the north side of the nave when one of the young men in the youth group, dressed as John the Baptist, ran down the aisle and shouted through his tied-on beard John's words in verses two and three. It caused something of a stir, and then the Gospel reading continued on normally.

But our lives should not.

When John the Baptist was preaching repentance from sin, he made it quite clear to his hearers that it involves not only remorse for and confession of our sins, but amendment of life as well.

We must bear fruit in keeping with repentance.

These fruits, no matter how good, no matter how many, can never save us from our sin; only our Triune God can do that.

We cannot come to God with our heads held high, so God, the Eternal Son of God, came down to us.

And remember the advice of the Reformer, Martin Luther: When feeling overcome by your sin, look to Christ's sacrifice for us. He is steady, though we are not.

~ Joel Drogomir

Reflections

Do you live out your faith in sincerity, or do you honor God only with your lips? Do you trust in Christ or in yourself?

[Open your journal book and write.]

Let Us Pray

Almighty and ever-living God, purge me of my hypocrisy and spiritual sloth, and strengthen me with Your Holy Spirit, that I may be a living testimony to Your conquest of sin and death, to Your glory alone. Through Jesus Christ my Lord, Amen.



Thursday, December 11

The Word of the Lord

2 Corinthians 5:17

¹⁷Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come.

FOMO – Fear of Missing Out

2 Corinthians 5:17

When I was a teenager, it felt vital to know what everyone else was doing. Your social calendar seemed to measure your worth. If you knew the gossip or the inside jokes about the people you passed in the halls, sang with in choir, or played with on the team—then you were truly *in*.

But sometimes you were left out. Sometimes you weren't invited. Or worse—you became the joke. Yuck. Teenage trauma still stings, even years later. We laugh at our awkward selves, but one wrong memory of being excluded still leaves a pit in the stomach.

But there's really good news. Jesus came to reconcile us to Himself so that we would be *in Christ*. His purpose was to bring peace, not performance; security rather than striving; belonging instead of distance; redemption instead of burden; adoption instead of alienation.

To be a new creation in Christ means you will never miss out again on anything that is for your good and His glory.

~ *The Rev. Gregory M. Smith*

Reflections

What are you afraid of missing out on?

[Open your journal book and write.]

Let Us Pray

Almighty God, who in Your Son has made us new and brought us near, grant that we may rest in the joy of belonging to You. Renew our weary hearts by Your Spirit, that we may no longer chase what fades, but delight in all that endures in Christ our Lord. Amen.



Friday, December 12

The Word of the Lord

Ezekiel 36:25-27

²⁵I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you shall be clean from all your uncleannesses, and from all your idols I will cleanse you. ²⁶And I will give you a new heart, and a new spirit I will put within you. And I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. ²⁷And I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes and be careful to obey my rules.

Come, Lord Jesus, and Transform Our Hearts

Ezekiel 36:25-27

There was a knock at his door, and the word “police” was ringing in his ears. Mike was always expecting the day to eventually come.

After 13 years of waiting, he was finally arrested for armed robbery. During the 13 years since he committed his crime, Cornelius “Mike” Anderson had changed his life. He altered his focus from waiting for the coming of man’s law to waiting for the coming of the Lord and obeying His laws. Mike put his trust in the Lord, walked away from a life of crime, and lived an honorable and faithful life in his community. Due to Mike’s life transformation, he was released with time served counting his 13 years of a new life. The Lord changed his heart of stone into a new heart of flesh.

We may not have committed a crime, but we definitely have sinned and fallen short of the Lord’s expectations. At times, life can be difficult, and unrepentant sin can turn our hearts to stone. Do you have a hard heart? Do you want to be cleansed from your sin, forgiven, and given a new heart? Call on the Lord and ask Him to free you. Ask Him to send his Holy Spirit to guide you.

As we walk through this life as forgiven and freed Christians, we wait for the coming of Christ. He will overcome evil and bring us His peace just like He did for Mike.

Come, Lord Jesus, Come!

~ Elizabeth Lesto Zadig

Reflections

Do you know someone with a hardened heart that longs for a new life in Christ, or is that someone you? Will you ask the Lord to come and transform the hearts of you and your loved ones?

[Open your journal book and write.]

Let Us Pray

Come, Lord Jesus. In the spirit of Ezekiel, give us soft and forgiving hearts, and send Your Holy Spirit to guide us into a forgiven and freed life in You. In Jesus' name, Amen.



Saturday, December 13

The Word of the Lord

Revelation 21:5

⁵ And He who sits on the throne said, “Behold, I am making all things new.” And He said, “Write, for these words are faithful and true.”

Outside God's Birthing Room

Revelation 21:5

The days before Christmas tend toward an almost magical tranquility. A wispy cloud of serenity settles over the bustle, slowing the frantic pace for all, with the possible exceptions of clergy with unfinished sermons and last-minute shoppers.

Neck-deep in the season of goodwill, I send them good thoughts and press on with holiday baking.

It's a gentle glide into the most silent and holy of nights. All is calm. All is bright.

Most years.

This year I've been not so much enveloped in magical tranquility as dumped into a hospital waiting room. Sure, it may be a metaphor—and no promises it won't end up mixed—but it's accurate at the end of an excruciating year of worries and missteps.

Most waiting rooms are drab, with one cheerful exception being the maternity floor, where no one cares about the décor. Joyful anticipation is front and center.

Imagining myself there, I am gifted a discernment: *It's Advent. You are outside God's birthing room. Get on your knees.*

Outside the room, exasperation and indifference evolve into expectation and hope. Inside, it's alive and spirited—literally.

A great labor is happening: "Behold, I am making all things new."

Our gift has arrived.

~ Shelia Watson

Reflections

What do the days before Christmas look like to you? Is it all hustle and bustle, or have you found pockets of calm and bright?

[Open your journal book and write.]

Let Us Pray

Heavenly Father, we thank You for Your presence, whether in busy times or tranquil moments. Help us to be thankful for Your gifts of renewal. In Christ's name we pray. Amen.



Sunday, December 14, Third Sunday in Advent

The Word of the Lord

Isaiah 35:1-10

¹The wilderness and the dry land shall be glad;
the desert shall rejoice and blossom like the crocus;

²it shall blossom abundantly
and rejoice with joy and singing.

The glory of Lebanon shall be given to it,
the majesty of Carmel and Sharon.

They shall see the glory of the Lord,
the majesty of our God.

³Strengthen the weak hands,
and make firm the feeble knees.

⁴Say to those who have an anxious heart,
“Be strong; fear not!

Behold, your God
will come with vengeance,
with the recompense of God.
He will come and save you.”

⁵Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened,
and the ears of the deaf unstopped;

⁶then shall the lame man leap like a deer,
and the tongue of the mute sing for joy.

For waters break forth in the wilderness,
and streams in the desert;

⁷the burning sand shall become a pool,
and the thirsty ground springs of water;
in the haunt of jackals, where they lie down,
the grass shall become reeds and rushes.

⁸And a highway shall be there,
and it shall be called the Way of Holiness;
the unclean shall not pass over it.

It shall belong to those who walk on the way;
even if they are fools, they shall not go astray.

⁹No lion shall be there,
nor shall any ravenous beast come up on it;
they shall not be found there,
but the redeemed shall walk there.

¹⁰And the ransomed of the Lord shall return
and come to Zion with singing;
everlasting joy shall be upon their heads;
they shall obtain gladness and joy,
and sorrow and sighing shall flee away.

Our Watering Can of Hope

Isaiah 35:1-10

I have a plant that is severely neglected. I moved it to the front porch this fall and forgot about it. Regularly, this plant begins to wilt and droop in an attempt to get my attention. Once in a while, as I pass the front door, I'll remember it and flood it with water. After a day or two, the leaves lift, and the color returns.

Isaiah 35 is a passage of hope reminding us we are never neglected by the King of the Universe. It's a promise of restoration—our dryness and brokenness will be revived. The imagery is of joy, floral blooms, and a reversal of fortunes.

A book I read to my children, *Tales of the Kingdom*, contains a cry through the book that says, "How goes the world?" The response: "The world goes not well, but the Kingdom comes!"

Isaiah 35 echoes this acknowledgment that the world has not gone well. We are parched as we walk on burning sands with anxious hearts. Our hearts long for the realization of our God coming to us. Yet the Kingdom is coming; in fact, it is already breaking in. There is a highway for us—a Way of Holiness where the redeemed walk singing. This awareness helps our anxious hearts to "be strong, and not fearful."

May this hope of a glorious Kingdom with a King who loves you unfailingly be living water to your parched soul. May you lift your heart to receive this good news as my plant lifts its leaves when watered.

~ Anna Smith

Reflections

What promise from Isaiah 35 can you hold on to as a watering can of hope for your soul?

[Open your journal book and write.]

Let Us Pray

Lord Jesus, Living Water, when our hearts droop and our roots grow dry, soak us again with Your grace. Turn our withering into bloom, our thirst into song. Let Your light draw us upward, and may our lives lift like leaves revived by rain. Amen.



Monday, December 15

The Word of the Lord

Psalms 146:5-10

⁵Blessed is he whose help is the God of Jacob,
whose hope is in the Lord his God,

⁶who made heaven and earth,
the sea, and all that is in them,
who keeps faith forever;

⁷who executes justice for the oppressed,
who gives food to the hungry.

The Lord sets the prisoners free;

⁸the Lord opens the eyes of the blind.

The Lord lifts up those who are bowed down;
the Lord loves the righteous.

⁹The Lord watches over the sojourners;
he upholds the widow and the fatherless,
but the way of the wicked he brings to ruin.

¹⁰The Lord will reign forever,
your God, O Zion, to all generations.

Praise the Lord!

Come to Restore

Psalm 146:5-10

It is striking how deeply concerned the Lord of the universe is for his people. This passage tells us that God cares for the oppressed, the hungry, the prisoner, the blind, the foreigner, the widow, the orphan, and the bowed down.

Not only does it show us that He cares for our earthly needs, but it confirms that He has a thoughtful and thorough plan for us, a plan to rewrite the ending of our sufferings when Christ returns.

In the midst of hardship, we tend to long for that day more deeply and earnestly, and our heart aches for that “far off country” C.S. Lewis refers to as heaven. And as is human nature, we lose focus of that glorious day when our sufferings diminish, and our earthly lives become quite comfortable.

However, the One whose focus and yearning never wavers from that day is Christ, Who at last will rush in with His power and deliver justice and comfort to His children—the day He will make things right.

As we patiently wait for that day, may we stay centered on the help and hope we have in our God, and His promise of restoration when He returns.

~ Mary Cox Bergengruen

Reflections

Do you trust in God's promise to bring justice and comfort to your life when He returns?

[Open your journal book and write.]

Let Us Pray

Lord, thank You for Your promise to be with us in our sufferings on this earth. We confess that we often lean on other sources of comfort, which never truly satisfy. Help us keep the hope of Your return alive in our hearts, and may we long for the day when we are finally with You. Amen.



Tuesday, December 16

The Word of the Lord

James 5:7-10

⁷Be patient, therefore, brothers, until the coming of the Lord. See how the farmer waits for the precious fruit of the earth, being patient about it, until it receives the early and the late rains. ⁸You also, be patient. Establish your hearts, for the coming of the Lord is at hand. ⁹Do not grumble against one another, brothers, so that you may not be judged; behold, the Judge is standing at the door. ¹⁰As an example of suffering and patience, brothers, take the prophets who spoke in the name of the Lord.

Be Patient Up There!

James 5:7-10

As a baseball dad, I'm well-versed in the acceptable things to shout when a kid is up to bat. "Good eye!" anytime he watches a ball. "Now you've seen it!" to encourage a kid who didn't swing at a perfect strike. And "be patient up there!" for the kid who swings at everything.

Patience can be good advice—a strategy for success. Whether it's patience with long-term investments, difficult family members, or bad drivers, patience is often a me-focused path to earthly benefit.

Not so in today's passage. James exhorts us to patience "*until the coming of the Lord*"—which may not happen in our earthly lives. And he cites the prophets as examples: people like Zechariah, who was stoned by a mob; John the Baptist, who was beheaded; and Jeremiah, who was imprisoned multiple times and died in exile.

The difference between *good-advice* patience and *holy* patience is what makes this passage so challenging. Holy patience waits on God, not on the advice to work. It recognizes that we may never see good things this side of glory. Yet it calls us to establish our hearts and avoid grumbling, trusting that God will indeed set all things aright and make all things new ... someday. That's really hard. So pray with me today for the grace to persevere in *holy patience*.

~ Hal Frampton

Reflections

How can you remember to be patient?

[Open your journal book and write.]

Let Us Pray

Holy and everlasting Lord, give us the grace to persevere in holy patience. Imbue our hearts with faith in your unseen ways, your goodness, and your promises in Scripture to bring forth the New Heaven and the New Earth. Come quickly, Lord Jesus! Amen.



Wednesday, December 17

The Word of the Lord

Matthew 11:2-11

²Now when John heard in prison about the deeds of the Christ, he sent word by his disciples ³and said to him, “Are you the one who is to come, or shall we look for another?” ⁴And Jesus answered them, “Go and tell John what you hear and see: ⁵the blind receive their sight and the lame walk, lepers are cleansed and the deaf hear, and the dead are raised up, and the poor have good news preached to them. ⁶And blessed is the one who is not offended by me.”

⁷As they went away, Jesus began to speak to the crowds concerning John: “What did you go out into the wilderness to see? A reed shaken by the wind? ⁸What then did you go out to see? A man dressed in soft clothing? Behold, those who wear soft clothing are in kings' houses. ⁹What then did you go out to see? A prophet? Yes, I tell you, and more than a prophet. ¹⁰This is he of whom it is written,

*“‘Behold, I send my messenger before your face,
who will prepare your way before you.’”*

¹¹Truly, I say to you, among those born of women there has arisen no one greater than John the Baptist. Yet the one who is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he.

The Messenger Who Will Prepare the Way for Messiah

Matthew 11:2-11

Have you ever wondered why John the Baptist sent his disciples to question Jesus about his Messiahship? After all, John was Jesus' cousin. He baptized Jesus and heard the voice of God proclaim Jesus as his "beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased". (Matt. 3:17). I know that I have wondered about this in the past.

At this point in the Gospel story, John has been imprisoned by Herod. His disciples are reporting to him in prison about the acts of Jesus, his preaching, healings, and miracles. John, during his ministry, had been preaching repentance "for the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand," a message of God's coming judgment. However, when John saw Jesus's ministry, he may have expected the Messiah to bring immediate judgment; yet Jesus' ministry emphasized mercy and restoration.

Jesus, who loved him, sent a most powerful message back to him, from Isaiah's prophecy (Matt 11:4-5, cf: Isaiah 35). "Go and tell John what you hear and see: the blind receive their sight and the lame walk, lepers are cleansed and the deaf hear, and the dead are raised up." John would have recognized these familiar prophecies from God's word about the coming Messiah.

These verses thrill me due to the powerful Old Testament prophecy fulfillment. Take time to read Isaiah 35, Isaiah 61, and Malachi 4, and marvel at how they point to Christ.

We can be excited during this advent season of the coming Messiah and His future return! Praise God!

~ Julie Thornton

Reflections

Does it feel differently to you that Jesus came to bring mercy and restoration rather than judgment?

[Open your journal book and write.]

Let Us Pray

We thank You, Lord, for Your great love and for sending Your only Son to save us. Forgive us when we rely on our own strength instead of Yours. Renew in us the same hope John had in the Messiah, and anchor our hearts in the joy of His salvation and the promise of His coming kingdom. In Jesus' name we pray, Amen.



Thursday, December 18

The Word of the Lord

Philippians 4:4-7

⁴Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, rejoice. ⁵Let your reasonableness be known to everyone. The Lord is at hand; ⁶do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. ⁷And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

Say It Again and Again: Rejoice!

Philippians 4:4-7

The directive is so important, we get it twice:

“Rejoice in the Lord always; **again I will say**, rejoice.”

Sing it again. Say it louder. Once more for the balcony.

Rejoice!

And no wonder it’s repeated. It needs to sink in.

As one of those balcony-sitters who needs to hear it over and over, I confess that I tend to cherry-pick both my worries and my prayers.

You know what I mean: Fretting over lots of little things because they seem too trivial to take to God. Or limiting my prayers to big stuff, asking for overall help and guidance or giving thanks in a general (or generic?) way.

That’s not what he said, though.

“Do not be anxious about *anything*, but in *everything* by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God.”

Those “absolute” words (*anything*, *everything*) are what editors typically frown upon and psychologists caution to avoid in relational discussions.

But this is the Lord. We can take Him at His word. *No* worries: none, zero, nada, zip. Pray about it *all*: Every. Single. Thing in your heart.

The Lord is at hand. He’s ready for a conversation.

Rejoice!

Second verse same as the first: *Rejoice!*

~ Shelia Watson

Reflections

Do you ever hold on to worries or feel reluctant to pray about things that seem small or insignificant? Imagine Jesus taking you out to lunch to chitchat about what's been going on lately. How would that conversation go?

[Open your journal book and write.]

Let Us Pray

Heavenly Father, please keep telling us again and again to rejoice, especially knowing Our Lord is at hand. This we ask in Christ's name. Amen.



Friday, December 19

The Word of the Lord

Nehemiah 8:10

¹⁰Then he said to them, “Go your way. Eat the fat and drink sweet wine and send portions to anyone who has nothing ready, for this day is holy to our Lord. And do not be grieved, for the joy of the Lord is your strength.”

Come for Joy

Nehemiah 8:10

I once heard a story about a couple who was very active in their church but was growing discontent as time went on. Marital conflict and issues with people in their parish left them feeling burnt out.

In a meeting with their pastor, they laid out all of their concerns and complaints. The pastor offered to pray for them and gave this brief prayer, “Lord, restore to them the joy of their salvation.” And that was all. They were surprised, even offended. Did he not hear everything they had just said?

I have often thought about this simple prayer since I heard the story. It reminds me of the familiar phrase in Nehemiah 8:10, “*the joy of the LORD is your strength.*” This word is given to people who are weeping after hearing God’s law. Their sorrow over their sin and failure to keep God’s commandments is a good thing, but Ezra and Nehemiah knew they weren’t supposed to stay sorrowful forever. Joyful fellowship with God is the ultimate purpose of God’s word in our lives.

In a penitential season like Advent, this is important to remember. The joy of our salvation will sustain us through the dark and trying seasons of life. The promise of joy is what draws us to confession and repentance. And when Christ comes again, the joy of the LORD will be our strength for eternity.

~ The Rev. Aaron Schnupp

Reflections

Where do you need the joy of your salvation restored?

[Open your journal book and write.]

Let Us Pray

Almighty God, the author of joy, through the life, death, resurrection, and promised return of Christ, You have given us great reason to celebrate. Renew in us the joy of our salvation so that we may be ambassadors of Your hope and peace on the earth. Amen.



Saturday, December 20

The Word of the Lord

Luke 15:3-7

³So he told them this parable: ⁴“What man of you, having a hundred sheep, if he has lost one of them, does not leave the ninety-nine in the open country, and go after the one that is lost, until he finds it? ⁵And when he has found it, he lays it on his shoulders, rejoicing. ⁶And when he comes home, he calls together his friends and his neighbors, saying to them, ‘Rejoice with me, for I have found my sheep that was lost.’ ⁷Just so, I tell you, there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous persons who need no repentance.

Listening for His Call

Luke 15:3-7

Through the lens of Jesus's parable of the lost sheep, we see that God is always calling us back to the safety and love of His Kingdom no matter how lost we are.

The nature of humanity is to be like a lost sheep. When we drift apart from Him through doubt, sin, or weariness, He chooses not to give up on us; rather, He will continue to search until we are safely back in His arms.

No matter how far one may have wandered, He is always calling and searching for us. It is up to us to respond and listen closely to His voice and feel His presence.

Heaven rejoices for every single person who repents and turns homeward toward God. Like sheep, we are prone to drift and may be distracted by our own desires, fears, or insecurities, but Jesus reminds us that our wandering doesn't end the story. Instead, it sets the stage for His grace to come find us.

God's love isn't general or abstract—it's deeply personal. He knows your name, your heart, your story. You are not one among many; you are the one He seeks.

~ Abby Malnuk

Reflections

How does the shepherd's joy over finding the one lost sheep reflect God's love for you?

[Open your journal book and write.]

Let Us Pray

Almighty God, unto whom all hearts are open, we ask for Your guiding light to shine on us and bring us closer to You. Thank You for coming to find us when we stray. In this season of Advent, please grant us the eyes to see, the ears to hear, and the heart to follow Your call home. We pray that our lives will reflect the joy of being found in You. Amen.



Sunday, December 21, Fourth Sunday in Advent

The Word of the Lord

Isaiah 7:10-17

¹⁰Again the Lord spoke to Ahaz: ¹¹“Ask a sign of the Lord your God; let it be deep as Sheol or high as heaven.” ¹²But Ahaz said, “I will not ask, and I will not put the Lord to the test.” ¹³And he said, “Hear then, O house of David! Is it too little for you to weary men, that you weary my God also? ¹⁴Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign. Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel. ¹⁵He shall eat curds and honey when he knows how to refuse the evil and choose the good. ¹⁶For before the boy knows how to refuse the evil and choose the good, the land whose two kings you dread will be deserted. ¹⁷The Lord will bring upon you and upon your people and upon your father's house such days as have not come since the day that Ephraim departed from Judah—the king of Assyria!”

From Fear to Faith: The King's Promise

Isaiah 7:10-17

In spite of his refusal to ask God for a sign, not from the deepest depths nor from the highest heights, Ahaz gets the message he surely did not want to receive.

We may find the historical context helpful, as he had enemies on all sides and was likely stuck in his own complacency.

How often do we find ourselves unwilling to accept the truth when the consequences require us to ask the even harder questions of ourselves? What if the very relief we are seeking causes us to lose the ground we fought so hard to secure?

If we are honest, we often find ourselves complacent, unwilling to step out in faith. But that is where God finds us in spite of ourselves. When we refuse to submit, He will still deliver our rescue.

God is bigger than all of the *IFs* and *BUTs* we put before him. No depths of despair, no grandeur in worldly achievements will stand between God and his people, even when we challenge His patience with us.

~ Laura Gruber

Reflections

What do you need to put behind you to step out in faith and receive the coming redeemer?

[Open your journal book and write.]

Let Us Pray

Almighty God, we humbly come to You in the deepest depths and highest heights. Please meet us as we are, in spite of ourselves. Overpower our fears and doubts with Your grace and patience and lead us into greater faith. Amen.



Monday, December 22

The Word of the Lord

Psalm 24

¹The earth is the Lord's and the fullness thereof,
the world and those who dwell therein,

²for he has founded it upon the seas
and established it upon the rivers.

³Who shall ascend the hill of the Lord?
And who shall stand in his holy place?

⁴He who has clean hands and a pure heart,
who does not lift up his soul to what is false
and does not swear deceitfully.

⁵He will receive blessing from the Lord
and righteousness from the God of his salvation.

⁶Such is the generation of those who seek him,
who seek the face of the God of Jacob. *Selah*

⁷Lift up your heads, O gates!
And be lifted up, O ancient doors,
that the King of glory may come in.

⁸Who is this King of glory?
The Lord, strong and mighty,
the Lord, mighty in battle!

⁹Lift up your heads, O gates!
And lift them up, O ancient doors,
that the King of glory may come in.

¹⁰Who is this King of glory?
The Lord of hosts,
he is the King of glory! *Selah*

Seeking the Presence of God

Psalm 24

In the opening verses of this Psalm, David praises God as the Creator and rightful ruler of the whole earth and everyone in it. God, a pure existence, needs nothing from anyone. He is the beginning and the end of all things, and we are called to come into His presence and to rest under His sovereign care.

This raises an important question. Who is able to stand before such Holiness? Who shall ascend the "hill of the Lord"? Who is the sinless one? The answer is not found in external rituals, but in the moral character of the one with "clean hands and a pure heart." Ultimately, "worthy is the Lamb who was slain" (Revelation 5:12), the only one "full of grace and truth" (John 1:14).

The Psalm concludes with the triumphant entry of the King of Kings in Jerusalem, a prophecy of Jesus' triumphal coming, and calls to all believers to open their hearts to Him. Truly, He is the only one with "clean hands and a pure heart." We are called to humble ourselves daily to allow Jesus' majestic entry into our hearts to grow even more into His likeness.

Are we making room for Jesus' entry into our hearts daily?

~ Laura Stojanov

Reflections

Who can stand in God's holy presence?

[Open your journal book and write.]

Let Us Pray

Lord God, the King of glory, we bow before You recognizing that the earth and everything in it belongs to you. Humbly we ask You to purify our hearts and hands through the power of the Holy Spirit so that we can ascend into Your holy mountain and dwell in Your presence. O God, take our lives in Your hands, transform our struggles into victories and our fears into courage that we may glorify You in everything we do. In Jesus' name we pray, and we surrender our lives to You, our precious Father. Amen.



Tuesday, December 23

The Word of the Lord

Romans 1:1-7

¹Paul, a servant of Christ Jesus, called to be an apostle, set apart for the gospel of God, ²which he promised beforehand through his prophets in the holy Scriptures, ³concerning his Son, who was descended from David according to the flesh ⁴and was declared to be the Son of God in power according to the Spirit of holiness by his resurrection from the dead, Jesus Christ our Lord, ⁵through whom we have received grace and apostleship to bring about the obedience of faith for the sake of his name among all the nations, ⁶including you who are called to belong to Jesus Christ,

⁷To all those in Rome who are loved by God and called to be saints:

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

A Reminder of the Good News

Romans 1:1-7

As a child, I spent so much time trying to keep up with my father as he took me around town running errands for his many projects.

Although I was maybe five or six, he always made me feel so included in his plans; from working on a truck or boat to planting tomatoes in the garden, I was happy to help despite mostly just standing there handing tools or playing with things on the ground.

Even though I didn't necessarily understand the thrills of being a bystander to fatherly activities, I felt so cherished that he would take the time to explain how to put certain things together or try to tie a tomato plant to a stick. The faith he had in me to carry out such a task meant the world!

As our earthly father may invest time into showing us skills, our Heavenly Father cherishes us even more so, as He is the way, the truth, and the light. What greater honor could we receive than the one of knowing we're set apart to be loved and walk in the grace of our savior Jesus Christ?

Romans 1:1-7 explains that by our abiding in the Lord, we can bring others closer to Him. From His resurrection, we are blessed with salvation but also gifted the responsibility of living out the gospel of God.

In this passage the Lord makes it clear not only that we are set apart for Him, but also that we have received the gift of grace and faith.

~ Savannah Saunders

Reflections

How can you abide in the “Good News” today?

[Open your journal book and write.]

Let Us Pray

Almighty Father let us be reminded that we are called to abide in You, as it is through You that we are provided grace and everlasting life. We thank You, Lord, for your faithfulness to us. Amen.



Wednesday, December 24, Christmas Eve

The Word of the Lord

Matthew 1:18-25

¹⁸Now the birth of Jesus Christ took place in this way. When his mother Mary had been betrothed to Joseph, before they came together she was found to be with child from the Holy Spirit. ¹⁹And her husband Joseph, being a just man and unwilling to put her to shame, resolved to divorce her quietly. ²⁰But as he considered these things, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, saying, “Joseph, son of David, do not fear to take Mary as your wife, for that which is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. ²¹She will bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins.” ²²All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had spoken by the prophet:

²³“Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son,
and they shall call his name Immanuel”

(which means, God with us). ²⁴When Joseph woke from sleep, he did as the angel of the Lord commanded him: he took his wife, ²⁵but knew her not until she had given birth to a son. And he called his name Jesus.

Davidic, Eternal, Kingly Prophecies Fulfilled in Us?

Matthew 1:18-25

Imagine yourself an early teen, engaged to an older businessman, finding yourself unexpectedly pregnant—and you’ve never had relations with a man!

Imagine yourself, her betrothed, a respected man in the village whose reputation will be ruined when the news gets out. How would you feel? What fears race through your mind? The law called for lethal stoning. Mary and Joseph both had much to fear.

God steps in by sending an angel to speak to Joseph in a dream. Mary had submitted to God’s will in response to the angel Gabriel’s message that she would conceive through the power of God’s Holy Spirit.

Now, in a dream, an angel conveys God’s plan to Joseph, urging him not to fear because the child is the fulfillment of Messianic prophecies. Joseph obeys God’s command, keeping and protecting Mary as his betrothed.

Even with the appearance of angels (who must be awe-inspiring beings!), their minds must be filled with myriad unanswered questions.

Could Mary be carrying the promised Messiah?

~ Shelley Walker

Reflections

What would you do if you found yourself in the presence of awe-inspired beings (angels)?

[Open your journal book and write.]

Let Us Pray

Lord Jesus, Savior, Messiah, open our eyes to the miracle of Your conception and birth, which depended on the humble obedience of two ordinary people. May we follow their example of obedience—even when the path is unknown and risky. Increase our faith that, empowered by the Holy Spirit, our small acts of obedience can achieve miracles for your kingdom. In Your name we pray. Amen.



Thursday, December 25, Christmas Day

The Word of the Lord

Luke 2:29-32

²⁹“Lord, now you are letting your servant depart in peace,
according to your word;
³⁰for my eyes have seen your salvation
³¹that you have prepared in the presence of all peoples,
³²a light for revelation to the Gentiles,
and for glory to your people Israel.”

The Gift Worth Waiting For

Luke 29-32

Can you imagine waiting for the perfect gift your whole life? When I was a kid, every Christmas I hoped for a train set. It was the one thing I wanted, but I never got one. Since my parents generally gave me everything else I wanted, all I could think is that I never told them how much I really wanted one.

Not so for Simeon! He was a “righteous and devout” man who made his deepest longing known to God. Simeon waited faithfully for the “consolation of Israel”—the long-promised Messiah. You can almost see this old man lingering in the temple courts every day, scanning the families walking through the gates, watching and waiting for the Lord to deliver on His promise.

Then one day, the waiting ended. The Holy Spirit guided him to the child who embodied salvation—the glorious gift prepared for the whole world! As Simeon held the infant Jesus in his arms, he saw the fulfillment of every hope, every promise, every prayer. No wonder he could finally say, “Now, Lord, you may dismiss your servant in peace.”

Like Simeon, we all wait for gifts that this world cannot give. But at Christmas, we are reminded that the gift worth waiting for—the one that truly satisfies—is not a thing, but a person: Jesus, God’s salvation revealed to all people.

~ The Rev. Gregory M. Smith

Reflections

What are you waiting for this Advent—and how might Jesus Himself be the gift you truly need?

[Open your journal book and write.]

Let Us Pray

Lord Jesus, You are the gift our hearts have been waiting for. Help us, like Simeon, to wait with faith and joy, trusting that Your promises will never fail. May we find our peace in Your presence and rest in the hope of Your salvation. Amen.



Friday, December 26

The Word of the Lord

2 Peter 1:19-21

¹⁹And we have the prophetic word more fully confirmed, to which you will do well to pay attention as to a lamp shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts, ²⁰knowing this first of all, that no prophecy of Scripture comes from someone's own interpretation. ²¹For no prophecy was ever produced by the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.

Come, Word Divine

2 Peter 1:19-21

As a Prayer Minister, I'm aware of the importance of preparing my mind and heart for the presence of the Holy Spirit when people approach us for prayer.

At the Communion rail on my Sunday to serve, I specifically ask God to be in my words. Trained to not give advice (our words), I pray that the words I speak are generated through the Holy Spirit and speaking directly to the one seeking prayer.

For centuries, the people of Israel depended on the guidance and protection of prophets, who were direct conduits to their powerful God. Years before Christ was sent to earth, the prophets had spoken of a Messiah coming to live among them. On this they hung their everlasting hope.

Recently, a friend wrote me, “We are studying Genesis before our church service and it is wild! Who wrote that stuff?” he asked. I told him that our Bibles tell us that Moses authored Genesis with God guiding him to record His story of Creation. I pray this is a wonderful beginning for my friend’s journey to the Truth.

As I pondered today's passage from 2 Peter, I smiled, remembering from John 1:1 that “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.” Not only was Christ at Creation, but He speaks to us today as the ultimate voice of God.

~ Normandie Updyke

Reflections

Today, many of us are concerned with the changes and turmoil that have darkened our world. Christ has spoken often of His protection, for those who draw close to Him. Are you willing to trust Him? Will you be ready when He returns?

[Open your journal book and write.]

Let Us Pray

Lord Jesus, as we celebrate Your birth this Advent season, help us to prepare our minds, cleanse our hearts, and **READ YOUR WORD** often, that we may live each day in the hope of Your eternal kingdom. Amen.



Saturday, December 27

The Word of the Lord

Hebrews 10:23

²³Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for he who promised is faithful.

Hold Fast to Christ Amongst the Waves

Hebrews 10:23

If you've ever been tubing behind a boat, especially when the driver wants you thrown off that tube (as my daddy always did when pulling me on the waters of Lake Marion during my childhood summers), you know what it means to "hold fast." It means to grab tightly and to not let go.

In Hebrews 10:23, the Lord exhorts us to "hold fast" to "the confession of our hope," which includes the Church's teachings on Christ, His Word, and our belief that our Lord will cleanse us of our sins and make for us a holy and eternal home. Not only does the Lord tell us to hold fast, but He doubles down, telling us to hold fast "without wavering." Even when the boat accelerates, when the tube is slung out by a quick turn of the wheel, and especially when you see the big wave (and big air) approaching, we are to hold tightly and without wavering.

Why? Because "he who promised is faithful." Christ has promised to return. We know few details of His plan, but we have faith in the planner who came down to live among us and who went to the cross for all of our sins. So during this season and throughout our lives, let us hold fast, without wavering, to our hope in Christ, and let us prepare ourselves for his return, for He will come as promised. As we await His return, let us have the joy of a nine-year-old boy riding a tube on the lake in July, holding on as tight as we can. And if you feel that you have been thrown off that tube by a rogue wave, or maybe your grip just slipped, know that the boat always comes back for you, and the captain of the boat always welcomes you right back on the tube for another ride.

~ Hunter Windham

Reflections

What would our days look like if, instead of allowing little problems and worries to take hold of our thoughts, we held fast to the hope of Christ's return?

[Open your journal book and write.]

Let Us Pray

Lord, please help us to keep the faith in You and Your Son, Jesus, and to know that Your Word is true, holy, and eternal. Grant us peace as we rest in your promise that Christ will return. Help us to put aside our everyday trifles and worries and take time, each day, to commune with You and to prepare ourselves for the day when we return to You. Amen.



Sunday, December 28, First Sunday after Christmas

The Word of the Lord

Isaiah 9:1-7

¹But there will be no gloom for her who was in anguish. In the former time he brought into contempt the land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali, but in the latter time he has made glorious the way of the sea, the land beyond the Jordan, Galilee of the nations.

²The people who walked in darkness
have seen a great light;
those who dwelt in a land of deep darkness,
on them has light shone.

³You have multiplied the nation;
you have increased its joy;
they rejoice before you
as with joy at the harvest,
as they are glad when they divide the spoil.

⁴For the yoke of his burden,
and the staff for his shoulder,
the rod of his oppressor,
you have broken as on the day of Midian.

⁵For every boot of the tramping warrior in battle tumult
and every garment rolled in blood
will be burned as fuel for the fire.

⁶For to us a child is born,
to us a son is given;
and the government shall be upon his shoulder,
and his name shall be called
Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God,
Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.

⁷Of the increase of his government and of peace
there will be no end,
on the throne of David and over his kingdom,
to establish it and to uphold it
with justice and with righteousness
from this time forth and forevermore.
The zeal of the Lord of hosts will do this.

From Gloom to Glory, the King Has Come!

Isaiah 9:1-7

The prophet Isaiah gives us a “*before*” and “*after*” of God’s Son coming into the world, to bring His rule and reign as King, not just to Israel, but to every nation.

The “*before*” is a fate of doom and gloom, specifically darkness.

The “*after*” is a complete transformation: light, abundance, joy, and freedom, as this coming King finally fulfills what God has promised and what God’s people have been waiting for.

This jurisdiction, ruled by the King of Glory, is one where the troubles this world is accustomed to must give way to a new kingdom characterized by peace, justice, and righteousness that will last forever, established and upheld by God Himself!

Amazingly, we are invited to be a part of this kingdom. This calls for a hallelujah! May we not just worship with our lips, though, but with our lives, by opening our hearts and giving this King full access. May we let Him transform our destiny from “*before*” to “*after*.”

May we worship our Lord as our coming King by letting Him bring us from gloom to glory!

~ Anne Schaffer

Reflections

Are there any areas of darkness or gloom, whether in your life or that of someone that you care about, where you could pray to invite God to reign, bringing His light and glory?

[Open your journal book and write.]

Let Us Pray

Oh Lord, we give You thanks that You rule with justice, righteousness, and peace, and that You transform gloom and darkness into light and glory. There is none like You! In Your kindness, please show us and those who we care about any area of our lives where we need Your light, and please give us grace to let You have Your place as King over every part of our lives. We ask this in the name of King Jesus. Amen.



Monday, December 29

The Word of the Lord

Luke 2:1-20

¹In those days a decree went out from Caesar Augustus that all the world should be registered. ²This was the first registration when Quirinius was governor of Syria. ³And all went to be registered, each to his own town. ⁴And Joseph also went up from Galilee, from the town of Nazareth, to Judea, to the city of David, which is called Bethlehem, because he was of the house and lineage of David, ⁵to be registered with Mary, his betrothed, who was with child. ⁶And while they were there, the time came for her to give birth. ⁷And she gave birth to her firstborn son and wrapped him in swaddling cloths and laid him in a manger, because there was no place for them in the inn.

⁸And in the same region there were shepherds out in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night. ⁹And an angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were filled with great fear. ¹⁰And the angel said to them, "Fear not, for behold, I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people. ¹¹For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord. ¹²And this will be a sign for you: you will find a baby wrapped in swaddling cloths and lying in a manger." ¹³And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God and saying,

¹⁴"Glory to God in the highest,
and on earth peace among those with whom he is pleased!"

¹⁵When the angels went away from them into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, "Let us go over to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has made known to us." ¹⁶And they went with haste and found Mary and Joseph, and the baby lying in a manger. ¹⁷And when they saw it, they made known the saying that had been told them concerning this child. ¹⁸And all who heard it wondered at what the shepherds told them. ¹⁹But Mary treasured up all these things, pondering them in her heart. ²⁰And the shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen, as it had been told them.

Mary, the Living Ark

Luke 2:1-20

When God instructed Noah to build an ark, He asked him to contain within it the possibility that each earthly species would be able to reproduce itself, so that the whole earth would once again be fruitful and multiply. We think of the Ark as the container and preserver of physical life.

Mary too contained within her physical Life. But far more than that. By Mary's sacrifice in saying "Yes" to God, she became the Ark through which Eternal Life, through her Son, would be offered to everyone who believed on Him.

As I painted this image of Mary, I imagined her bathed in divine light—the presence of God surrounding her as she carried the hope of the world within her womb. Her humble "yes" opened the door for Heaven to touch earth. She became the living Ark of God's covenant mercy, bearing the Savior who would bring eternal life to all who believe.

During this Advent season, I pray that we, too, will say "yes" to God's call—to become humble vessels of His presence, carriers of His light in a world still longing for redemption.

~ Shirley Veater

Reflections

Where might God be inviting you to say “yes,” so that His life can be born in and through you?

[Open your journal book and write.]

Let Us Pray

Lord Jesus, as Mary carried You in her womb, may we carry You in our hearts. Fill us with Your presence so that Your eternal life might flow through us to others. Help us to say “yes” to Your will, even when the path is unknown. Amen.



Tuesday, December 30

The Word of the Lord

John 1:1-14

¹In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. ²He was in the beginning with God. ³All things were made through him, and without him was not any thing made that was made. ⁴In him was life, and the life was the light of men. ⁵The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.

⁶There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. ⁷He came as a witness, to bear witness about the light, that all might believe through him. ⁸He was not the light, but came to bear witness about the light.

⁹The true light, which gives light to everyone, was coming into the world. ¹⁰He was in the world, and the world was made through him, yet the world did not know him. ¹¹He came to his own, and his own people did not receive him. ¹²But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God, ¹³who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God.

¹⁴And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth.

Come to the Truth

John 1:1-14

Waves of news stories roll across our screens at every hour of the day and night and negative narratives can bring the darkness of the world very close.

AI assistants offer us instant (and sometimes incorrect) answers to any question we ask. We are drowning in a sea of information, and sometimes truth seems elusive.

In the first chapter of the Gospel of John, we are told the true identity of Jesus in beautiful poetic language. He is eternal. Jesus was active with God in creation, and He is one with God. He is more than God's messenger; He is God incarnate. God became flesh to be a light to all people, showing the radiance of God and revealing the true nature of God. John the Baptist pointed to the true light – Jesus Himself.

Just as when Jesus walked the earth, there are those today who don't know Him. And those who don't see the light.

As Christians, we know that truth is not found in a direction but in a person. We know that when we turn our eyes to the face of Jesus, we will see the source of light and the source of truth.

~ Nancy Hardwick

Reflections

Where are you looking when everything seems dark around you? Who do you know who does not know the truth, and how are you pointing the way to the true light?

[Open your journal book and write.]

Let Us Pray

Dear Lord, thank You for becoming flesh and dwelling among us. You light our path in the darkness and reveal to us the true nature of God. Help us to keep our eyes fixed on Your face when everything around us is chaos. Transform us into Your likeness so we can point the way for others to see Your truth. All these things we ask in the name of Jesus. Amen.



Wednesday, December 31, New Years Eve

The Word of the Lord

Titus 3:4-7

⁴But when the goodness and loving kindness of God our Savior appeared, ⁵he saved us, not because of works done by us in righteousness, but according to his own mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit, ⁶whom he poured out on us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior, ⁷so that being justified by his grace we might become heirs according to the hope of eternal life.

The Gift of the Giver's Salvation

Titus 3:4-7

When we think about Titus 3:4-7, one small takeaway that comes to mind is a simple word—giving. During this holiday season, our calendars are chock-full of giving: giving of our time, giving of our money, giving of our homes for hosting, giving of our own daily practices to make way for special events.

It can be joyful, but it can also feel draining. Where does all this busyness come from—and why?

Titus 3: 4-7 is a clear reminder that the gift of our Savior was not because our Christmas gifts are the best, our checks the biggest, or our homes the prettiest, but rather, because of His unending love to bring us the hope of eternal life.

In all our giving, may we remember the Giver who first gave Himself for us.

When our giving becomes all too consuming, it should bring comfort to know that the best gift is already ours—no shopping required, no good deed needed.

His mercy has secured our salvation.

~ Kristen Arrington

Reflections

Have you ever received a gift that was not earned, but simply given out of abundant love and mercy?

[Open your journal book and write.]

Let Us Pray

Heavenly Father, open our hearts and minds to the beautiful hope of this Advent season. Fill our thoughts and actions with Your lovingkindness, that we may give to others as You have so mercifully given to us. Amen.



Thursday, January 1, New Years Day

The Word of the Lord

Colossians 1:12-14

¹²giving thanks to the Father, who has qualified you to share in the inheritance of the saints in light. ¹³He has delivered us from the domain of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of his beloved Son, ¹⁴in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.

Discovering Our Inheritance

Colossians 1:12-14

Hungarian brothers, Zsolt and Geza Peladi, were so poor that they lived in a cave outside Budapest, earning a little money by selling scraps on the street.

It wasn't until later in life (now in their forties) that a lawyer tracked them down giving them life-changing news: their maternal grandmother had passed away years prior leaving them an inheritance of over \$6 billion.

Simply by birthright, each of us has a far greater inheritance in the form of God's Kingdom and the forgiveness of sins through Jesus Christ's sacrifice on the cross.

Imagine for a moment being like the Hungarian Brothers and only becoming aware of this life-altering inheritance later in life. Or worse, not at all?

In this passage, Paul and Timothy are spreading the news of the great shared inheritance we have both on earth and the inheritance that awaits us through eternal life in heaven. That's certainly not news to keep all to ourselves!

~ Andrew Correll

Reflections

Who in your life is living a life unaware of the great inheritance that God our Father has bestowed upon each of us?

[Open your journal book and write.]

Let Us Pray

Dear God, we are in awe of the inheritance that You have bestowed upon us. Grant us strength and wisdom not to squander this inheritance, but to use it prudently in a way that honors You. We pray that, through the Holy Spirit, You give each of us a heart to share the great news of humanity's shared inheritance with those we come in contact with so that we may be like the lawyer to the poor brothers or Paul and Timothy to the people of Colossae. Amen.



Friday, January 2

The Word of the Lord

Psalm 27:1

¹The Lord is my light and my salvation;
whom shall I fear?

The Lord is the stronghold of my life;
of whom shall I be afraid?

Christ's Coming: Freedom from Fear

Psalm 27:1

When I was younger, fear was a familiar feeling that would often show up in waves of overthinking and anxiety. I felt the need to control every part of my life: where I would work, where I would live, and, most of all, how others perceived me.

I carried the weight of fear about others' opinions and a desire to be seen as worthy, capable, and competent by those around me.

By coming into the world and dying for our sins, Christ broke sin's power over us, including the fear of man.

Jesus embodies the light described in Isaiah 9:2, the same light that is our salvation, as David declares in Psalm 27:1. Because of Christ's coming, we can live free from fear, confident in His finished work on the cross.

The Lord is our stronghold, and when we place our trust in His sovereignty, the fear of man fades in the light of God's glory and the love He has shown us through His Son.

When I came to truly understand this, I discovered peace in releasing my fears to the Lord. Now, when I wrestle with those fears, I bring them to God, trusting that I need not be afraid because He is in control.

~ Kathryn Romey

Reflections

In what ways does the fear of man creep into your life? How does the coming of Jesus allow you to live free from that fear?

[Open your journal book and write.]

Let Us Pray

Heavenly Father, thank You so much for sending Your son into the world as our light and our salvation. Thank You for being our stronghold and for providing us freedom from our fears. Please guard our hearts from the fear of man, and help us to bring our fears to You, our Sovereign Lord. It's in Your name we pray, Jesus. Amen.



Saturday, January 3

The Word of the Lord

Matthew 5:14-16

¹⁴“You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden.

¹⁵Nor do people light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a stand, and it gives light to all in the house. ¹⁶In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven.

Let Your Light Shine

Matthew 5:14-16

Christmas is often called The Season of Lights. You have been seeing strings of lights on streets, in stores, in church, and your home.

But by now, January 3rd, they are starting to fade and be taken down.

In this passage from the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus is expecting us to be light to the world. From where does our light come?

As Isaiah prophesied in Sunday's reading (Isaiah 9:2), the people walking in darkness had seen a great light, whom we now know is Jesus. And Jesus wants us to give this light away to others.

Our light reflects the presence of Jesus in us that is so bright it can't be hidden, and we are to be "put on a stand" for everyone to see. Our light is a way for others to see how we live and, ultimately, to glorify our Father in heaven.

Advent is over. Although the bright electric lights will be back again next Christmas, we have an even more powerful and sustainable source of light all year: Jesus.

May that light live and grow in us, and may others see and believe.

~ Susan DiCamillo

Reflections

How bright is your light? How will you use it this year?

[Open your journal book and write.]

Let Us Pray

Lord Jesus, thank You for the season of Advent, which helps us to remember that You are our light. Help us not hide our faith in You during the year ahead. Help us to share Your light boldly and effectively with others...for Your glory. Amen.

