



A gift of daily devotions written by members and friends of Ocean View Presbyterian Church.



Introducing our 2021 Advent Devotional

Greetings, Sisters and Brothers, Members and Friends, those familiar and those far away, persons known to us and unknown, and welcome to the Advent Devotional Booklet of Ocean View Presbyterian Church; prepared in our homes, with thoughts for you in yours. We are pleased to walk with you through these 26 days, sharing the love of God in Christ (and you are welcome if you do not know God in this way!). It is a time of waiting for what the heart yearns most for, and this year certainly there is much that has burdened our hearts! The pandemic season has been more like Advent than we might ever have wished: it feels like the wait is both endless and, often, pointless. There is a point, and there will be an end! We have, in the pandemic, seen signs of great hope, especially in those brave enough to care, and to serve in hospitals and in morgues, in rescue vehicles and in sanitation trucks, in churches and in schools and in the streets. We have also seen signs of ongoing disaster, as variants rise up, and seasons change, as this stubborn virus waxes and wanes in one place, then another. We've seen human life glorified in songs and waves and parades of thanks; we've seen human life demeaned by those who despise and deride every effort to save and to serve, who court death for themselves and for others in a tawdry, theatrical tantrum. And through it all we've had no choice but to wait, and to persevere; to go through each day in hope, or, sometimes, to push through with gritted teeth and determination when no light shines.

Advent is like that, friends. The longer the "Master" is away, the more the "servants" are tempted to sleep; to neglect their

duties – duties which are not just dishes and laundry and chickens and goats, but are also justice, and righteousness, and peace. Duties that require much in the doing, and often seem to give little or no reward.

In her book Advent: The Once and Future Coming of Jesus Christ, Fleming Rutledge quotes retired Presbyterian pastor and professor John Bald (p. 53; emphasis mine): “What we really need is not some intellectually acceptable answer to life’s most mysterious conundrum about God’s action or inaction. The need is **for God**, and the nurture of the expectation of God’s coming to be coupled with the patience to wait for God to come in God’s own time. The waiting is not easy.”

What eases the waiting, friends, is that it is mutual. We wait with our like-minded sisters and brothers, who long for mutual love, respect and harmony, knowing together the wait is not in vain, that our God is coming in Christ to heal us and all of creation; to establish justice and to drive out the works of destruction and detestation. We take each other’s hand; we walk the road together; we bear each other up and do the works of God, which are appropriate to human beings, made in God’s own image.

In this devotional, these sisters and brothers in faith sing to you the new song, tell to you the old, old story, and praise with you the One True God, who was and is and always shall be, and who is always coming into the world.

Peace be with you; the peace found within these pages, and the peace found in the very presence of our God.

Pastor Terry



“Advent increases our hope, a hope which does not disappoint. The Lord never lets us down.”

- Pope Francis

Sunday November 28, 2021

Morning Psalms 24;150

Amos 1:1–5, 13–2:8

1 Thess. 5:1–11

Luke 21:5–19

Evening Psalms 25;110

Worship Readings

Jeremiah 33:14–16

Psalms 25:1–10

1 Thess 3:9–13

Luke 21:25–36

This first week of Advent has the theme of Hope.

Because we are human, we hope. Many of the lovely old hymns we sing on Sundays are about Hope – for the future, for forgiveness, for our spouses and children, for the weather. And for the world.

Every Christmas our family followed a time-honored ritual; we traipsed out to the nearby woods, argued about and then chopped down one of the spindly pine trees that grew too close together and brought it home, tied to the roof of the car. You would have thought it was the tree in Rockefeller Center. During the war, we saved the tinsel and the candy canes to use over and over.

My wish list back in the day always had a white pony, replete with bridle and cowboy suit. I never received it; still the hope was there. I don't remember being visibly upset. There was always next year.

This year my hopes are more complicated, and just as unattainable; world peace, longevity, good health. Maybe one will come true.

June Goldman

Monday November 29, 2021

Morning Psalms 122;145

Amos 2:6–16

2 Peter 1:1–11

Matt. 21:1–11

Evening Psalms 40; 67

Who is the stranger in the manger?
Why does Herod perceive such danger?
A child King, born without bling.
He's really not into that royalty thing.
A Messiah from above, with a message of love.
He came not with vengeance, but for all redemption,
For all who would be faithful and follow, without exception.
He said follow my commandments and love your neighbor as yourself,
And you will be the best Christmas Elf.
It's Jesus's Birthday, what gift should we give?
The best gift is just in the way we should live.
By thinking of others ahead of ourselves,
And sharing the gifts from God on our shelves.
He watches from above and inside and around us,
He helps to keep evil from trying to confound us.
When we walk uprightly and speak the truth,
He protects us from above in the Holy Replay Booth.
He makes the right call to prevent our fall.
He is the light to show us the way,
To follow his path with reverence each day.
He bore all our sins, unfair it would seem,
All as part of a heavenly scheme.
He did this all to fulfill God's dream,
And allow us all to be part of his team.

Jim Dugan



“May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in him, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.”

Romans 15:13

Tuesday November 30, 2021

Morning Psalms 33;146

Amos 3:1–11

2 Peter 1:12–21

Matt. 21:12–22

Evening Psalms 85; 94

When I was in college, I thought that I should read the Bible. Taking a good look at the size of the book, I decided to settle for the New Testament. I just read it – straight through. No studying, no second reads, I just read it.

Over the past ten years I have had the pleasure of learning much about both the Old and New Testaments in evening Bible study. I have realized that my first reading left me with two important recollections. Those two scriptural concepts have been of substantial support throughout my life. I have always felt that the passages were meant for me personally. Certainly, special scriptures come alive for each of us.

The first verses are Matthew 6:25-34. They are beautiful and poetic. Jesus is instructing us so we can improve our daily, earthly lives. I will leave them to your own reading, and only share a central pearl: *“And can any of you by worrying add a single hour to your span of life?”*

The second passage is Matthew 21:18-22, part of today’s lectionary. Here Jesus is disappointed with a fig tree and causes it to miraculously wither. His disciples were amazed and questioned how he did that.

Tuesday November 30, 2021 (cont)

Jesus answers in verses 21 and 22:

“Truly I tell you, if you have faith and do not doubt, not only will you do what has been done to the fig tree, but even if you say to this mountain, ‘Be lifted up and thrown into the sea,’ it will be done. Whatever you ask for in prayer with faith, you will receive.”

Do I believe in modern miracles? Yes --- yes, I do. Can a mountain be moved? Yes, it can. In this passage Jesus is challenging our spiritual selves. We are not to be limited by our physical strengths. We are only limited by the purity of our faith. How can I develop a faith so pure that I have no doubt, *no doubt at all*, that the mountain will move? This is a faith that remains well beyond my reach. Finding that faith continues to be a driving force in my life.

Today we celebrate hope. Let us all continue to move toward God with increasing faith and love, and let us all have hope that such a pure faith, a faith that moves mountains, will be ours.

Bill Colwill



Wednesday December 01, 2021

Morning Psalms 50;147: 1-11

Amos 3:12-4:5

2 Peter 3:1-10

Matt. 21:23-32

Evening Psalms 53; 17

Usually, I look forward to this time of the year. Mostly, because my husband and I spend time traveling to visit family and friends and different churches from Thanksgiving and throughout the Christmas holiday. We also start planning for the next big event and vacation for the New Year. Sometimes we spend so much time planning for the future that we forget to live in the moment.

This year, however, is a bit different. Ed, a close friend and mentor, who I have known for more than 35 years passed away in March. He was not only a mentor to me but was a role model for many in his community. He and his wife were involved in their church, participated in various charity & community events, spent time with family and friends and traveled around the world. But, regardless of how busy he was, he would always touch base at least 3 or 4 times a year, especially around the Christmas holiday. The last time I heard from Ed was a text on January 1 of this year. It was an interesting text to me and my husband wishing us well and God's peace and blessings in the New Year. Although I intended to, I did not respond to the text message and told myself I would do it later. I never got around to it. Then, in March, I received a phone call from his wife letting me know that Ed passed away. Needless to say, I was devastated and felt guilty for not responding to his last text. However, I do take some comfort in knowing he had a life well lived.

Ed's passing reminded me not to take life for granted. Now, instead of just looking forward to certain times of the year, I look forward to every day and feel grateful for every moment that God allows me to be on this earth. I thank and praise Him for peace, joy and blessings.

Wednesday December 01, 2021 (cont)

Remembering, that every day is a gift and our greatest gift is our Lord and Savior, Jesus the Christ.

Sing unto the Lord with thanksgiving; sing praise upon the harp unto our God.

Psalm 147:7

Diane Brown



Thursday, December 02, 2021

Morning Psalms 18:1-20; 147:12-20

Amos 4:6-13

2 Peter 3:11-18

Matt. 21:33-46

Evening Psalms 126; 62

...The Lord is my rock, and my fortress, and my deliverer,
Thy God, my rock, in whom I take refuge...

Do you have one greatest 2021 HOPE?

Do you have one greatest 2021 FEAR?

I am sure each one of us could list several in each of the two categories. 2021 has been a year of many uncertainties, a mixed-up year for our global community.

Before reading further, I suggest you ponder, reflect on your personal 2021 HOPES and FEARS. Now imagine, both happening simultaneously; it would be a strange event. We do not think of these two being connected.

Two thousand years ago, the greatest HOPE of God's people was that the Messiah would come. But for the people like Herod, who lived by their own rules and ignored God, it was their worst FEAR. So, when Jesus was born, it was a cataclysmic moment when, as the carol, O Little Town of Bethlehem proclaims, 'The HOPES and FEARS of all the years are met in thee tonight'.

Happy is he whose HOPE is in God of Jacob,
When HOPE is the Lord.

(Pss 146:5)

God is our refuge and strength,
Therefore we will not FEAR..

(Pss 18:2a)

Prayer:

Lord God, help us to look for HOPE even in the midst of FEAR

Charlotte Wheatley

Friday, December 03, 2021

Morning Psalms 102;148

Amos 5:1–17

Jude 1–16

Matt. 22:1–14

Evening Psalms 130; 16

Hope is the thing with feathers
That perches in the soul,
And sings the tune without the words,
And never stops at all,

And sweetest in the gale is heard;
And sore must be the storm
That could abash the little bird
That kept so many warm.

I've heard it in the chillest land,
And on the strangest sea;
Yet, never, in extremity,
It asked a crumb of me.

This lovely poem by Emily Dickinson was written in 1861. She didn't title her poems because she felt they would never be published. Here the poet describes hope as a little bird that lives in the soul and never goes away. Even in times of despair, we have an infinite capacity for hope.

Psalms 102 is a cry for help. Verse 12 tells us "But thou, O Lord, shall endure forever; and thy remembrance unto all generations."

May your days be filled with hope, peace, joy, and love during this Advent Season.

Carol Kester

Saturday, December 04, 2021

Morning Psalms 90; 149

Amos 5:18–27

Jude 17–25

Matt. 22:15–22

Evening Psalms 80; 72

Render Unto Caesar

Nobody likes paying taxes. That was true just as much in Jesus' time as it is today. While most of us agree that our taxes go to provide vital services: education, police and fire protection and roads, we often think our tax dollars are going to programs we don't think are necessary, or that others aren't paying their fair share.

I grew up in Connecticut and was raised Congregationalist. Up until 1818, the Congregationalists were the established church in the state. That meant people's tax dollars went to support Congregational churches, regardless of their faith. That certainly wasn't fair to people of other faiths, and it ran afoul of the Constitutional separation of church and state.

In today's Scripture passage, Jesus is questioned by a representative of the temple leaders as to whether it was lawful for the Jews to pay taxes to Rome. He responds by asking someone to produce a coin, which bears Caesar's image. He then says, "Render therefore to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's."

I believe Jesus isn't just talking about money here. In church stewardship campaigns, we are called upon to support the church's work with our "time, talents and treasure." Similarly, I think Jesus is telling us that we have a responsibility not only to our faith community but also to the larger community of

Saturday, December 04, 2021 (cont)

which we are a part. That doesn't just mean paying our taxes, but serving our greater community in any way we can to help our neighbors. We can come out to support activities that benefit organizations such as volunteer fire companies. We can volunteer for our local library or historical society.

And at the very least, we can VOTE!

Jim Berrie





*When the power of love overcomes
the love of power the world will
know peace.*

Jimi Hendrix



“Now may the Lord of peace himself give you peace at all times and in every way. The Lord be with all of you.”

2 Thessalonians 3:16

Sunday, December 05, 2021

Morning Psalms 24; 150

Amos 6:1–14

2 Thess. 1:5–12

Luke 1:57–68

Evening Psalms 25; 110

Worship Readings

Malachi 3:1–4

Luke 1:68–79

Philippians 1:3–11

Luke 3:1–6

PSALM 150

Hallelujah!

Praise God in His Holy house of worship,
praise Him under the open skies

I am an amateur photographer and a Christian who believes that God speaks to us in many ways and in many places. Photography opens my eyes to the splendor of the world we live in and the Peace that passes all understanding. My eye catches color or movement and my ears hear birdsong, and usually early in the morning, there is all of this: an open sky brilliant with the promise of a new day and the opportunity to once again feel God's Love. I look around and there is only me....and God. Such privilege! I receive an abundance of love when I share my photos, but what I really hope to convey is that the beauty of the earth is available for everyone to see! When time is taken to be silent and watchful, it is all there. In just *one day* early in the year Jim and I saw a pair of eagles fly into our town park and commence building a very large nest. Bluebirds found the backyard house we loaned them, and in our travels that day we watched as snow birds noisily returned to a large field for the night. I called it The Bird Day. What a gift! With pleasure and anticipation, I look forward to the dawning of each new day.

Sunday, December 05, 2021 (cont)



Father God, thank you for each day's beginning and the ability to hear, see, feel.....and record its beauty.

Lorie Hartsig

Monday, December 06, 2021

Morning Psalms 122; 145

Amos 7:1–9

Rev. 1:1–8

Matt. 22:23–33

Evening Psalms 40; 67

“I am the Alpha and the Omega” says the Lord God, who is and who was and who is to come.

(Revelation 1:8)

The theme for this week in Advent is Peace. As I write this meditation, I am drawn to Revelation chapter one verse eight which speaks of the master of Peace.

We as people claiming to be Christians tend to wake up in the morning with thoughts of what is on our agenda for today, instead of how can I help bring Peace to the world.

Do we ever wake up with Revelation verse eight on our mind? I tend to think not, but if we were to take verse eight as the beginning of our day and then look at what we think is important to get done today, we will have a different approach to what is on our list of tasks.

Lord help us to remember You first in all that we think is important to get done, and let us put Peace first on our list of tasks each day.

Amen

Mike Quinn



Peace On Earth. We hear that phrase a lot, especially during the holiday season. We see it expressed on Christmas cards and greetings.

It's very late at night as I write this, and all is quiet, except for the sound of the gentle breezes and occasional traffic passing by. It sounds so peaceful. I know there is much unrest in the world around all of us, but for right now, the sound of the gulf breezes, and the quiet around me (well my eighty plus pound puppy Michaela is snoring a little) is a reminder that there is peace. It still exists, and it still can be found, if we look for and listen to it. There can be quiet in our hearts and in our souls as well. Even in the midst chaos of various kinds, such as financial problems, illnesses, grieving hearts and other things that are out of our control, there can still be peace on earth but only if you want to find it.

Have you really looked for it? Peace On Earth is there. Minus the snoring puppy, well actually even with the snoring puppy, I choose to have a Silent Night, on this Midnight Clear I am dwelling in. While I may not be Rocking Around the Christmas Tree doing the Jingle Bell Rock dance at this very moment, I do know that All I Want for Christmas, is not a hippopotamus. It is this. Peace On Earth, so that we all may sleep in heavenly peace on these Silent Nights, with Joy to The World. And if we listen closely, we might just hear, not only Jingle Bells, and Sleigh Bells, but Angels on High, singing Gloria, in excelsis deo! Let there be peace on earth, and let it begin with me, and with you.

From my house to yours, We Wish You A Merry Christmas, and a Happy New Year!

The Post Newspaper, Texas City, TX.

Tuesday, December 07, 2021

Morning Psalms 33; 146

Amos 7:10–17

Rev. 1:9–16

Matt. 22:34–46

Evening Psalms 85; 94

.... “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind.”³⁹ And a second is like it: ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’ (Matthew 22: 37, 39)

I seem to be running into these verses from scripture a lot recently. Coincidental timing of the selected lectionaries? Perhaps I’m just in a place where it resonates with me more than in the past? Or, maybe it’s the piece of Jesus’ wisdom that I am meant to reflect on in this devotion. Whatever the reason it is words like these that make me wonder why we make this whole ‘God thing’ so difficult; why we have to overthink and justify seemingly everything we do and why we always have to be the one with the right answer.... These simple words, that call us to a way of life that is just that simple... and just that complicated at the same time. This isn’t anything new – we have been playing this tug-of-war since leaving the garden. But our readings today, especially the Psalms seem to draw us back to the marvel of God’s creation, the power of his mercy and forgiveness and the peace found only in His love.

We all see the current state of our world; the injustice, cruelty and suffering and wonder why God doesn’t do something about it – how can He allow the powerful to exploit the meek? The same questions were brought to God in Psalm 94 but the psalmist quickly turned from lament to praise; reminding us of God’s protection and coming justice. Psalm 146 praises the God of creation and the defender of the weak – ‘God loves good people, protects strangers, takes the side of orphans and widows, but makes short work of the wicked’. (Psalm 146: 9 The Message). Both Psalms 33 and 146 warn us that the powerful don’t hold the answers we seek nor do the so-called experts; everything man creates is temporary but God is everlasting – in short, we can’t make it on our own.

Tuesday, December 07, 2021 (cont)

The author of Psalm 85 celebrates the God of mercy forgiving the sins of Israel and pleads for Him to do it again; to come and make His people whole, where “Love and Truth meet in the street, Right Living and Whole Living embrace and kiss!” (Psalm 85: 10 The Message). Isn’t that what we are doing during this time of Advent? We are anticipating the time when Jesus marries all of the themes in this devotional – Hope, Peace, Joy and Love and we are made whole once again living as God intended.

People are not simple; the world is not simple; but there is one single truth that is; we are loved and there is unbounded grace and mercy in that love; and we are surrounded by beauty and goodness. During this season of Advent, I pray we take the time to quiet the noise in and around us and experience the love of God and pass that on to our neighbor; whether family, friend or stranger.

Bob Wolf



Wednesday, December 08, 2021

Morning Psalms 50; 147:1-11

Amos 8:1-14

Rev. 1:17-2:7

Matt. 23:1-12

Evening Psalms 53; 17

Each year now, as I seek to stay in Elsie's good graces, I ponder my assigned Scriptures for several weeks. I read different translations, several times, tossing and tumbling the words, seeking a theme or commonality.

Each of this year's passages speak directly to a community of faith — the people of Israel (Amos), new followers of Christ (Matt), and the church at Ephesus (Rev). Each reveals guidance and advice. Two include a warning. Amos is pretty stark, calling out the people of Israel for turning a blind eye to those in need as they, instead, yearn for the familiar harvest festival celebrations.

How do these passages speak to us today? To what extent are we ignoring the plight of the needy, piling heavy burdens on people while refusing to help them (Matt 23:4 CEV). How have we forsaken our first love (Rev2:2-4 MSG)? To what extent are we enamored with the showiness of today's Pharisees, instead of humbling ourselves as servants to others (Matt 23:12 NIV)?

We bemoan the poor service at our favorite restaurants, looking down our noses at those lazy people on the government role who don't want to work. Yet, we fail to support measures to increase the minimum wage, to support universal child care, to improve family and medical leave benefits, so that people can afford to go to work.

We complain about the traffic on Rt26, Rt24 and Rt9 and rally against creative higher density housing projects. Yet, we miss the point of about how the lack of affordable rental housing in eastern Sussex forces people to spend hours each way, getting from Laurel

Wednesday, December 08, 2021(cont)

or Seaford or Bridgeville to their jobs in Millville, Bethany, Lewes, and Rehoboth. Talk about “heavy burdens”.

We go about our lives, oblivious to the ALICE (assist limited, income constrained, employed) people among us, those families who are working two or three jobs so to have the \$22/hr wage required to afford a 2BR apartment in Delaware. Many were designated as “essential workers”, forced to be in public spaces during the worst of the pandemic, unable to “work from home”. More burdens.

How long do we stand by, observing, while others (the homeless, the needy, the marginalized) deal with arcane social services processes, bouncing from one agency to another for aid, while struggling through their own family life issues? (See the series “Maid” on Netflix.)

Amos has a harsh warning (v7-8, v11) to “You people, [who] crush those in need and wipe out the poor” (v4, CES).

“Repent and do the things you did at first” (Rev 2:5b). Repent ... for the Lord is coming!

Come, Lord Jesus, come!!

Dale Smith

Thursday, December 09, 2021

Morning Psalms 18:1-20; 147:12-20

Amos 9:1-10

Rev. 2:8-17


Matt. 23:13-26

Evening Psalms 126; 62

Change is hard for me. I don't like it when the aisles are changed at the grocery, I can get impatient when my schedule frequently changes, and moving to a new house means lots of changes. All of these changes have happened to me this year, yes even the grocery aisles, but maybe change is exactly what God is asking me to do - *consider change*. When we open ourselves to new or different situations, we will grow. Grow in mind and spirit. At the grocery, because of the aisles being updated, I picked up a new food item: farrow and I have a new side dish favorite. My schedule has changed frequently the last couple of months, as I am sure yours has too, and I am trying to remember to keep my calendar up to date, realizing that "things do happen." Our move to our new address has opened many new opportunities for me, allowing me to grow in mind and spirit. God is making changes in my life and asking me to *consider change*. I pray for patience and understanding as change comes my way.

Prayer: Loving Father in heaven, as we await your coming into this world, we pray for patience and guidance to recognize your loving hand in all we do, think and say. Let this second week of Advent be a time where we experience Peace in Christ.

Kristina Taylor ("Kris")



When I was a kid, my Grandma liked to make breakfast food for dinner every now and then. And I remember one night in particular when she had made breakfast after a long, hard day. On that evening so long ago, she had placed a plate of eggs, sausage, and extremely burned biscuits in front of my Granddad. I remember waiting to see if anyone noticed! Yet all my Granddad did was reach for his biscuit, smile at my Grandma and ask me how my day was at school. I don't remember what I told him that night but I do remember watching him smear butter and jelly on that ugly burned biscuit. He ate every bite of that thing... never made a face nor uttered a word about it! When I got up from the table that evening, I remember hearing my Grandma apologize to my Granddad for burning the biscuits. And I'll never forget what he said: "Honey, I love burned biscuits every now and then." Later that night, I went to kiss Granddaddy good night and I asked him if he really liked his biscuits burned. He wrapped me in his arms and said, "Your Grandma put in a hard day of work today and she's real tired. And besides – a little burned biscuit never hurt anyone!" As I've grown older, I've thought about that many times. Life is full of imperfect things and imperfect people. I'm not the best at anything, and I forget birthdays and anniversaries just like everyone else. But what I've learned over the years is that learning to accept each other's faults, and choosing to celebrate each other's differences, is one of the most important keys to creating a healthy, growing, and lasting relationship. And that's my prayer for you today... that you will learn to take the good, the bad, and the ugly parts of your life and lay them at the feet of God. Because in the end, He's the only One who will be able to give you a relationship where a burnt biscuit isn't a deal-breaker! We could extend this to any relationship. In fact, understanding is the base of any relationship, be it a husband-wife or parent-child or friendship! So please pass me a biscuit, and yes, the burned one will do just fine. And PLEASE pass this along to someone who has enriched your life. Be kinder than necessary because everyone you meet is fighting some kind of battle.

Life without God is like an unsharpened pencil – it has no point

Author Unknown

Friday, December 10, 2021

Morning Psalms 102; 148

Hag. 1:1–15

Rev. 2:18–29

Matt. 23:27–39

Evening Psalms 130; 16

In the quiet of the night, in my deep REM sleep, there are sometimes nightmares. Not those of films or TV shows, but those from my childhood and adulthood. They are the ones full of fear, anger, powerlessness, hunger, wordlessness, pain, and sorrow.

When I awake, I can feel the tense muscles in my face and hands, but I can't always recall the dreams. Those nightmares I do remember; I quickly want to forget.

Too often this past year has been one full of the stuff of nightmares for all of us – violence, beatings, COVID, deaths, misinformation, and too much more. Yet, I see in my friends, family, and congregation members, signs of hope and kindness. Like David, I believe the Lord gives me counsel. In the night I think he instructs my heart so I can overcome these nightmares and walk in his light. I want to bless him for his presence all around me. I pray that I not be moved from his love. In this Advent season I hope you too will continue to pray and walk with me in His light of hope, peace, joy, and love. Let Him become the stuff of our deep sleep.

Gloria Bartholomew



Saturday, December 11, 2021

Morning Psalms 90; 149
Hag. 2:1–9
Rev. 3:1–6
Matt. 24:1–14
Evening Psalms 80; 72

One of many of the most difficult challenges in life is trying to relate human infinite world to God’s eternal kingdom. Because we live in a time-measured, physically defined environment, it becomes difficult to comprehend a world without limits of time and space. But this is the world that God has created for us to live in forever “if” we honor his glory and live according to his teachings. We must come to recognize and respect the brevity of life and fulfill God’s teachings through the love he has shown us. With God’s spiritual guidance we have time in this finite world to live a righteous life and prepare ourselves for that great day when we meet our maker.

Bruce Hobler





The joy we feel has little to do with the circumstances of our lives and everything to do with the focus of our lives.

Russel M. Nelson



*“Though you have not seen him, you love him;
and even though you do not see him now you
believe in him and are filled with an inexpressible
and glorious joy”*

1Peter 1:8

Sunday, December 12, 2021

Morning Psalms 24; 150

Amos 9:11–15

2 Thess. 2:1–3, 13–17

John 5:30–47

Evening Psalms 25; 110

Worship Readings

Zephaniah 3:14–20

Isaiah 12:2–6

Philippians 4:4–7

Luke 3:7–18

John's gospel is unique among the other accounts of Jesus' ministry in that he relentlessly forces us to contemplate the person of Jesus. Whereas the other gospels might tell us that "there is need of only one thing" (Luke 10:42), it is John who rivets our attention to that "one thing" which is Jesus' own person. Whatever else Jesus calls us to do, it must all flow from a response of trust and faith in Jesus.

By the fifth chapter, Jesus is under the sentence of death. Not only was Jesus healing on the sabbath but also, by "calling God his own Father," he was "making himself equal to God" (John 5:16-18). To the religious authorities this was blasphemous. What ensues in the rest of the chapter is an informal trial of sorts (5:19-47). Jesus' response was this: "Very truly, I tell you, the Son can do nothing on his own, but only what he sees the Father doing; for whatever the Father does, the Son does likewise." (John 5:19). "The works that the Father has given me to complete, the very works that I am doing, testify on my behalf that the Father has sent me" (John 5:36). Jesus is "the glory that comes from the one who alone is God" (John 5:44). If this is who Jesus is, then everything depends upon our response to him. "Very truly, I tell you, anyone who hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life, and does not come under judgment, but has passed from death to life." (John 5:24).

Sunday, December 12, 2021 (cont)

There is a reminder here as we approach Christmas. While Mary, or Herod the Great, or magi, or Bethlehem innocents, or angels, or shepherds are vitally important to the birth story, Jesus is the one we worship and to whom we give our lives. And, as chapter 5 of John indicates, Jesus' life is read, not from the perspective of his birth, but of his death and resurrection. The infant Jesus is “the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world” (John 1:29, see 36).

Rev. Kerry Shull



Monday, December 13, 2021

Morning Psalms 122; 145

Zech. 1:7–17

Rev. 3:7–13

Matt. 24:15–31

Evening Psalms 40; 67

PSALM 145:

Life Application Study Bible – New Living Translation:

“A psalm of praise of David”

Psalm 145:2 “I will praise you every day; yes, I will praise you forever”

No, I did not praise God every day for I was not brought up in a home where Jesus/God was praised every day other than praying “God is Great God is Good, let us thank Him for our food” or “Now I lay me down to sleep, I pray the Lord my Soul to Keep; if I should die before I wake, I pray the Lord my Soul to Take.” This kept me scared of death for many years and created nightmares of endless darkness!

Psalm 145:15 “The eyes of all look to you in hope; you give them their food as they need it.”

My parents did send me to Sunday school at an Episcopal Church where I did what I had to, to be confirmed. However, I do not remember being read to or reading Bible stories, learning about Jesus or taught who Jesus is or what he did for us.

Monday, December 13, 2021 (cont)

Psalm 145:19 “He grants the desires of those who fear him; he hears their cries for help and rescues them.”

Despite my background, I continued to attend church and eventually joined the Catonsville Presbyterian Church where I taught Sunday school, did volunteer work and became an ordained Elder. It wasn't until we moved to Ocean View and joined OVPC that I began taking bible study classes and I joined the choir where I learned and began to **feel**. Finally, I **GOT IT! THE CROSS! JESUS DIED FOR US! Then ROSE AGAIN TO SAVE US!**

Psalm 145:2 “I will praise you every day; yes, I will praise you forever.

Yes, I talk to Jesus, give thanks and praise him; **BUT now I need a “Prayer Chair” to LISTEN!** (*Thank you Marie Waehler*)

LIZ HOBLER



Tuesday, December 14, 2021

Morning Psalms 33; 146

Zech. 2:1-13

Rev. 3:14-22

Matt. 24:32-44

Evening Psalms 85; 94

Matthew 24:32-44

The Necessity for Watchfulness

For many, the Second Coming of Jesus is not a popular hot topic of conversation, but I have a fondness for the subject. Today's scripture has always intrigued me. It comes as we near the end of the Gospel of Matthew. After leaving the temple, Jesus went to the Mount of Olives where his disciples came to him, privately asking him questions about "the signs for the end times." He tells them, "About that day and hour no one knows, neither the angels of heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father." But when it DOES happen, Jesus said that he will come on "clouds of heaven with power and great glory. And he will send out his angels with a loud trumpet call, and they will gather his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other."

Jesus stressed that they needed to be watchful, they needed to beware of false prophets and false doctrines, especially of those who claimed to know the day and hour, since Jesus himself had no clue. He talks about all the Biblical characters whom we know and love who were eating and drinking, going about their day-to-day activities, and about Noah who built the ark because God told him to. When Noah entered his ark, he knew nothing about a flood until it swept them all away, and that's what it will be like when the Son of Man comes again.

So, here we are in Chapter 24, verses 40-43 where two are in a field; one will be taken and one will be left. Two women will be grinding meal together; one will be taken and one will be left. And the owner of a house would have made preparations if he knew that a thief was

Tuesday, December 14, 2021 (cont)

coming in the night to break into his house. Well, yeah, of course he would!

In the chapters leading up to chapter 24, Jesus has been teaching and teaching and teaching about what it means to be his followers. He tells us that, “Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away.” His words. “Feed my sheep.” The word “feed” isn’t just about food. **Feed** my sheep, yes, but also clothe them, house them, love them, pray for them and with them, forgive them. Care for the widows, the prisoners, the sick, the poor, and the marginalized. Love one another as I have loved you. And from the Sermon on the Mount, the Golden Rule: In everything, do to others what you would have them do to you.

The two women were working side by side, doing the exact same thing – grinding meal. So, why was one taken and one left behind? As I often do, I put myself into the scripture. I stood nearby imagining their conversation. Was one of the women complaining about all she had to do when she got home? Was there never enough time for getting caught up on laundry, dishes, making bread, checking Instagram and Facebook to like-or-not-like all the postings by family and friends? Was there not enough time to respond to all the texts on her cell phone, or to read the latest romance novel, or to schedule a fun lunch with friends at the new bistro down the road, or the need to find a new hair stylist or nail tech?

Was the other grinder listening and being supportive, but also trying to get a word in edgewise because she had once been in that woman’s shoes, just like the people in the time of Noah who were going about their day-to-day activities? Had this woman found a better way – The Way – putting God and the Kingdom of Heaven first, knowing that all of the other **necessary** tasks that were

Tuesday, December 14, 2021 (cont)

required of her would also be accomplished? Was she trying to share that with her co-worker?

Brother Curtis Almquist tells the story of St. Francis of Assisi who was out hoeing in his garden. A passerby asked him what he would do if he were suddenly to learn that he would die before sunset that very day. Francis replied, "I would finish hoeing my garden." Francis was ready. As a follower of Jesus, he had put first things first and was prepared for that trumpet call.

Even if you don't believe in the literal translation of the Second Coming, Jesus calls us to be watchful and set our priorities in the right order, so that like St. Francis, we are ready if that trumpet call comes at the end of this day.

Marie Cook Waehler



Wednesday, December 15, 2021

Morning Psalms 50; 147:1-11

Zech. 3:1-10

Rev. 4:1-8

Matt. 24:45-51

Evening Psalms 53; 17

Praise the Lord! How good it is to sing praises to our God; for God is gracious and a song of praise is fitting.

As I look out my window this afternoon and see sunshine and blue sky, I find it very easy to sing praises to God. Yesterday, however, it was a different story as I watched the water creep up our street and get deeper and deeper. The rain was pouring down and the wind was blowing. I was remembering ten years ago when we sustained considerable damage when Superstorm Sandy paid us a visit. As it turned out we were lucky this time with only minor damage and some clean up duties.

I do praise God daily that I am blessed to live in such a special place. What joy to share this with our family and friends.

Prayer. Gracious and loving God, I thank you for this amazing world you have created. And I thank you and praise you for the gift of family and friends that bring so much joy as we share this season of Advent. Amen

Marlene Quinn

Thursday, December 16, 2021

Morning Psalms 18:1-20; 147:12;20

Zech. 4:1-14

Rev. 4:9-5:5

Matt. 25:1-13

Evening Psalms 126; 62

Long ago we were given a recipe or a map for living. Today's readings come from Psalms, Matthew, Revelation, and Zechariah.

2021 brought Covid, sickness, struggle, turmoil, angst, aloneness, masks, borders, death, fear, fires, floods, hunger, immigrants.... Add to the list if you wish. However; as I read the lectionary readings for 2021 my spirits have been lifted --- read on!

Psalms 18 says He rescued me from my powerful enemy and in Psalm 62 David says He is my rock and my salvation. He is my fortress, strength, deliverer, shield. I will not be shaken. God is my refuge (and ours). Psalm 126: The lord has done great things for us and we are filled with joy. Psalm 147: "Extol the Lord"; "Praise you God". Let all creation praise God; sing with Thanksgiving.

In Zechariah, Zerubbabel, the governor of Judah, was given the responsibility of rebuilding the temple. The returned exiles were weak, discouraged and poor. God says not my might nor by power but by My Spirit. It's only through God's Spirit that anything of value can be accomplished and God was on their side. As one lives for God, determine not to trust your own strength or abilities, but depend on God and work in the power of the Spirit. Begin where you are and what you are and leave the results to God.

Matthew 25 tells us we must be prepared. Each of us has to be responsible for his or her own spiritual condition. Spiritual preparedness cannot be bought or borrowed at the last minute. God has entrusted us to follow the right path.

Having been given a recipe or a map we make choices. Sometimes we follow explicitly and sometimes we take a detour.

Thursday, December 16, 2021(cont)

Throughout scripture we find do's and don'ts, however we detour and try to make it on our own.

And now I'm remembering an old hymn – Trust and obey, for there's no other way...,

Elsie Young



Friday, December 17, 2021

Morning Psalms 102; 148

Zech. 7:8–8:8

Rev. 5:6–14

Matt. 25:14–30

Evening Psalms 130; 16

Psalm 130:7 & 8

“O Israel, hope in the Lord; for with the Lord there is unfailing love. His redemption overflows. He himself will redeem Israel from every kind of sin.”

There it is, in the middle of Advent the shadow of the cross.

I can remember always disliking when these scriptures were read as we were preparing for Christmas. What a downer, I would think.

My father would gently remind me, “If it wasn’t for Good Friday and Easter, we wouldn’t have Christmas.”

It took more than a few years for me to understand what he was saying to me. When I finally understood what Dad was saying, Advent became something different for me. Now I prepare myself for Christ my Savior and my Salvation to come.

Yes, the cross is in the shadows, but let us be thankful and joyful. For in that cross is the reason we celebrate this season.

Christ will redeem us from every kind of sin!

Alleluia, Alleluia, Amen!

Cathy Yantz

Saturday, December 18, 2021

Morning Psalms 90; 149

Gen. 3:8–15

Rev. 12:1–10

John 3:16–21

Evening Psalms 80; 72

Lord, you have been our dwelling place in all generations. Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever you had formed the earth and the world, From everlasting to everlasting you are God.

Psalm 90: 1-2 (NRSV)

These lections, it seems to me, are all about what we have done, and continue to do, as those who have been created by God, in love. The failure of the first couple to observe limits; the failure of Satan to observe limits; the choice of darkness rather than God's glorious, eternal light: all these indicate an inner condition which has not embraced companionship with God which instead celebrates the distortion of selfhood into separateness.

Over all that, in power and in patience, God is, and God creates, and God preserves, mending the harm we do in creation, mending the harm we do to ourselves, 'til at last our hearts conceive what is good, and right, and true. Then this will grow in us, and come to birth at the last, to full flower, healing and restoring us under the eye of God, who was and is and will be – and who loves.

Rev. Terry Dougherty

Where humility is combined with the remembrance of God that is established through watchfulness and attention, and also with recurrent prayer inflexible in its resistance to the enemy, there is the place of God, the heaven of the heart in which, because of God's presence no demonic army dares to make a stand.

Philotheos of Sinai (Philokalia, Palmer, Sherrard and Ware, p. 53)



*Since love grows within you, so
beauty grows. For love is the
beauty of the soul.*

Saint Augustine



“And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love may have power, together with all the Lord’s holy people, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, and to know this love that surpasses knowledge—that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God.”

Ephesians 3:17-19

Sunday, December 19, 2021

Morning Psalms 24; 150

Zeph. 3:14–20

Titus 1:1–16

Luke 1:1–25

Evening Psalms 25; 110

Worship Readings

Micah 5:2–5a

Luke 1:46–55 or

Psalm 80:1–7

Hebrews 10:5–10

Luke 1:39–45 (46–55)

*At the sound of Mary's greeting,
Elizabeth's child leaped within her,
and Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit.*

(Luke 1:41)

At the holidays the world expects conviviality and generosity. But spiritually we may be doubting, grieving, scared, or confused. We may be disillusioned with two years of pandemic. The more we try to pursue the illusive holiday ideal, the more displaced and abandoned we feel.

Mary, the young, unmarried mother-to-be of Jesus, may feel displaced from and abandoned by her family of origin. Perhaps that is why she flees out of town to visit her cousin, also a mother-to-be but a generation older. The angel Gabriel told her of the connection. “Elizabeth even now is six months pregnant. You see, nothing is impossible with God.”

Mary seems open to the possibility of a miracle happening in her life, as in Elizabeth, until now barren. Rising up, Mary heads to the hills to confide in her kinswoman and receive some much-needed affirmation. “Rising up” is the same Greek verb the gospels apply to the rising of Jesus from the grave. Mary’s spiritual turnaround is beginning. She rises up to offer ministry to an older woman, to inform Elizabeth that God is doing marvelous things through them both. And the infant in Elizabeth’s womb rises up in recognition.

Sunday, December 19, 2021 (cont)

Mary and Elizabeth give what each other lacked: community and connection. God removes their isolation and helps them to see themselves as part of something larger than their individual lives.

In Advent, we are all in some sense bearing something larger than ourselves, bearing new life within us.

Rev. Gerald Egger



Monday, December 20, 2021

Morning Psalms 122; 145

1 Sam. 2:1b–10

Titus 2:1–10

Luke 1:26–36

Evening Psalms 40; 67

*“God is magnificent; He can never be praised enough.
There are no boundaries to His greatness.
Generation after generation stands in awe of Your work;
each one tells stories of Your mighty acts.”*

Psalm 145: 3- 4 – The Message

This autumn we had a wonderful adventure traveling through the United States. We drove through ever-changing landscapes, each breathtaking in their uniqueness. From lush rolling hills, to wide open prairies, to mountains, deserts and painted rock formations; crisscrossing rivers from sea to sea, God's majesty has no bounds.

In California, we held our first grandchild, Aleksí Theodore. God's greatest splendor can be seen in the face of a newborn and in the love of new parents. We reminded our son, Eric, that the love he feels for Aleksí will only grow. A parent's love does not diminish when the child becomes an adult. Our love for him is still as strong as the love he now feels for his son.

How much must God love us? He has given us all good things: beauty, fellowship and family. God's greatest gift to us is His son Jesus, through whom we are blessed with everlasting life.

Surely God is worthy of our awe and praise!

Eric and Ellen Neumann

Monday, December 20, 2021 (cont)



*Oh beautiful for spacious skies, for amber waves of grain.
For purple mountain majesties, above the fruited plain.
America, America, God shed His grace on thee
And crown thy good with brotherhood from sea to shining sea.*

Katherine Lee Bates

Tuesday, December 21, 2021

Morning Psalms 33; 146

Isaiah 31:1-9

2 Sam. 7:1-17

Titus 2:11-3:8a

Luke 1:39-48a (48b-56)

And Mary said: "my soul glorifies the Lord and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior, for he has been mindful of the humble state of his servant. From now on all generations will call me blessed, for the Mighty One has done great things for me---holy is his name."

In my family Christmas was a time of joy and excitement. We waited with anticipation... our mother made it special. I remember attending the Christmas programs at church. Each child had a 'piece' to memorize and recite at the appointed time. Mom ensured that we were dressed in our finest clothes for the occasion. How important we felt to contribute to this joyous time to celebrate Jesus' birth.

As an adult I still feel the joy and anticipation of celebrating the birth of our Savior. I also remember the mothers, especially since my own mother passed away during Advent fifteen years ago. Was she, too, as excited as Mary when she learned of my impending birth?

Mary sings with praise and excitement. Imagine, the mother of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. As a new mother, I wonder, as we all did, what to expect. I remember the first time I was pregnant, how blessed I felt...and still do today. Mary, however, is the mother of Jesus and over two thousand years later, we still know Him, we rejoice in Him, we worship Him.

As the song says, Mary, Did You Know? "...did you know that your baby boy is Lord of all creation...did you know that your baby boy will one day rule the nations..."

Tuesday, December 21, 2021(cont)

...did you know that your baby boy was Heaven's perfect Lamb, and the sleeping Child you hold is the great, the Great I AM? Oh, Mary, Mary did you know?"

Dear Lord, thank you for the greatest of all gifts... You!

Pam Price



Wednesday, December 22, 2021

Morning Psalms 50; 147: 1-11

2 Sam. 7:18-29

Gal. 3:1-14

Luke 1:57-66

Evening Psalms 53; 17

Love and Blessed

When I begin to write I first read the readings for several days off and on throughout the day. This year when I did this, I was struck by the love that God had and has for his people. I feel very blessed and loved by God on a daily basis.

In the reading from 2 Samuel King David is questioning why God loves him and why God shows him, his family and Israel this great love. David is feeling very blessed “And now, O lord God you are God and Your words are true and you have promised this goodness to your servant.” (2 Samuel 7:28) It’s encouraging to know that God always loves us and is always with us!

I believe that everyone can relate to Elizabeth’s story in some way. Newborns are truly gifts from God and blessings to their families. The familiar story of Elizabeth in Luke 1: 57-66 shows us the celebration of new life. “” What kind of child will this be?” And the hand of the Lord was with him.” (Luke 1: 66) Doesn’t this seem familiar? When a new baby arrives the family and friends wonder what they will be like and are definitely blessed and loved by the Lord.

All of this love and blessing does not require good works by us to receive it. “” And the scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, preached the gospel to Abraham beforehand, saying “In you all the nations shall be blessed””. (Galatians 3:8) “That the blessings of Abraham might come upon the Gentiles in Christ Jesus, that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith”. (Galatians 3:14)

Wednesday, December 22, 2021 (cont)

“Offer to God thanksgiving and say your vows to the most High. Call upon Me in the days of trouble; I will deliver you and you shall glorify Me.” (Psalm 50: 14-15) This psalm reinforces that God is with us at all times showing his love for us. Psalm 147 lists many of our blessings and is a praise to God. “Praise the Lord! For it is good to sing praises to our God; For it is pleasant, and praise is beautiful.” (Psalm 147: 1)

Thought for the day:

God Loves and Blesses Us Every Day!

Sue Rizer



Thursday, December 23, 2021

Morning Psalms 18: 1-20; 147: 12-20

Jer. 31:10–14

Gal. 3:15–22

Luke 1:67–80 or Matt.1:1–17

Evening Psalms 126; 62

I believe in miracles. How many times have we heard this phrase in songs, commercials, hospitals, places of worship, movies and books? The book of Matthew tells of the ultimate miracle for Christians.

"Can you imagine what Joseph thought? First, he discovers that Mary is pregnant. Then an angel visits him and relays this unbelievable message. This child is from the Holy Spirit and he will be named Jesus, which means the LORD saves. This child is the fulfillment of the Immanuel prophecy in Isaiah. This wasn't just good news; it was incredible news! But who would believe it? And then this child would be born in Bethlehem, the city of Kings. Micah's prophecy would also be fulfilled in this child. "The hopes and fears of all the years are met in thee tonight." May this incredible news resonate in our ears and reverberate down into our hearts, that we would worship the King whom wise men seek."

Source: <https://www.covenantshorthills.org/post/fourth-week-of-advent-dec-23-26>

I look for miracles every morning as I head to work. The mountains surrounding my village bring calmness to my day. The church steeple in the distance brings strength. The crisp air brings energy and sounds of children greeting each other brings hope.

Recently I visited a local farm where the owners were overrun with kittens. I could not resist a peek! The dad, Adam, went to an old, gray barn nearby and pulled out two tiny ones from the wall. They were so tiny and so beautiful. Two weeks later as I write this page, they are peering over my computer screen and jumping on the keys.

Thursday, December 23, 2021(cont)

They cuddle and curl up as if they had always lived in this warm and safe house. They are my newest miracle and they bring joy to my days.

Wishing each of you joy and peace this season of miracles.

Merry Christmas, friends

Cindy Woodruff



A Christmas Memory

While driving after dark tonight, I noticed more Christmas lights on homes than I remember in past years. My first thought was how beautiful; why have more people not decorated?

Jesus' gentle spirit prompted me to enjoy the beauty and not bemoan the missed opportunities – then I was overcome with a cherished past Christmas memory...

I thought about my mama's never missed annual adventure to see homes lit up. The overly decorated were her favorite – “they must really love Jesus’ she would declare with childlike excitement. After securing her wheelchair in the back of the van, our last adventure to look at lights was no different than all the years before. At 100 years old, she reminded me one last time how those decorating so brilliantly must really love Jesus.

Cindy Benjamin





NATIVITY OF THE LORD

CHRISTMAS EVE

Morning Psalms 102; 148

Isa. 60:1–6

Gal. 3:23–4:7

Matt. 1:18–25

Evening Psalms 132; 114

Isaiah 9:6-7a

*For a child has been born for us, a son given to us;
Authority rests upon his shoulders; and he is named
Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God,
Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.
His authority shall grow continually,
and there shall be endless peace
for the throne of David and his kingdom.*

It is finally Christmas Eve. Everyone has different traditions. Some people decorate the tree on Christmas Eve. For my family, all the baking and decorating and wrapping was over. After a supper of stew or chili, my mother and father and I went to church. I remember the first year I was considered old enough to go to the midnight service. It was very cold as we walked up the street and around the block to our big brick church. We walked into the candlelit sanctuary and found our seats. The music was familiar and I could sing most of the carols. Our friends and neighbors filled the pews. We listened to familiar words being read about baby Jesus and Mary and Joseph, in a stable in a little town called Bethlehem.

The angels came to the shepherds telling them of this child who was born for us, a son given to us....To Us. To teach us, and love us. He was a wonderful counselor, a mighty God, an everlasting Father, a prince of peace. But....he was a baby! Amazing!! As I walked home, I remember being tired and happy. The stars were shining...my feet were dancing. And I remember feeling so peaceful. As my mom and dad put me to bed, they kissed me and said ‘tomorrow is Christmas ...Sleep well, sweetheart...and I fell asleep in my warm bed, hoping that Jesus was warm and loved too.

CHRISTMAS EVE (cont)

*Silent night, Holy night! All is calm, all is bright....
Sleep in heavenly peace...*

May we all feel the peace of that small baby on this special
night

Bev Bailey





CHRISTMAS DAY

Morning Psalms 2; 149

Micah 4:1–5; 5:2–4

1 John 4:7–16

John 3:31–36

Evening Psalms 98; 96

"Why do nations and people protest and grumble in vain?

Rulers on earth plot against God and Christ.

Let's break their chains.

The one on the throne in heaven laughs:

"I install my king, my son. Bow in homage."

(Psalm 2)

Three thousand or so years ago,

the Psalmist foresaw Christmas coming to us.

Last Christmas, we missed caroling, kin, ribbons and bows,

as all of us on earth bowed to a virus

that could have been the death of us.

Catch your breath:

behind our death masks each of us still breathes in and out

the Breath borne to Mary,

newborn in Jesus,

now borne by us

to cast away caste, fear and hate

and create a new state

where humanity is our family,

every birth and family is holy,

and we are newborn messiahs, ones anointed to now show

that heavenly love, justice and peace

are not just prayers

but are here to stay

and now bear who and where we are

far beyond who and here we are.

Thomas Bentz

ADDITIONAL READINGS

NATIVITY OF THE LORD I

First Reading	Isaiah 9: 2–7
Psalm	Psalms 96: 1-13
Second Reading	Titus 2: 11–14
Gospel	Luke 2: 1–14 [15–20]

NATIVITY OF THE LORD II

First Reading	Isaiah 62: 6–12
Psalm	Psalms 97: 1-12
Second Reading	Titus 3: 4–7
Gospel	Luke 2: [1–7] 8–20

NATIVITY OF THE LORD III

First Reading	Isaiah 52:7–10
Psalm	Psalms 98: 1-9
Second Reading	Hebrews 1:1–4 [5–12]
Gospel	John 1:1–14



Open the Door of Love

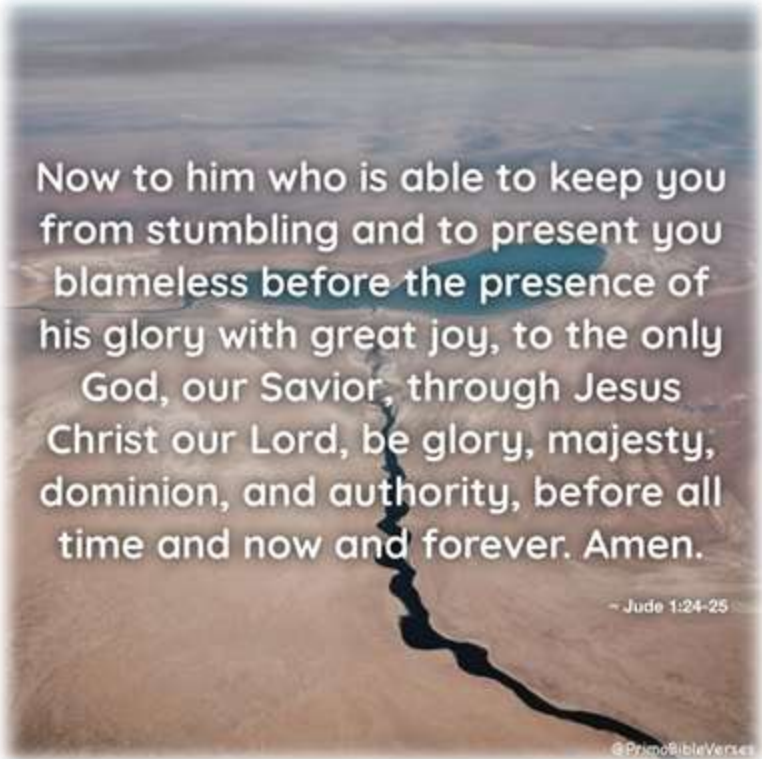
— *Robert Louis Stevenson*

Loving Father, Help us remember the birth of Jesus,
That we may share in the song of the angels,
The gladness of the shepherds,
And worship of the wise men.

Close the door of hate
And open the door of love all over the world.
Let kindness come with every gift
And good desires with every greeting.
Deliver us from evil by the blessing, which Christ brings
And teach us to be merry with clear hearts.

May the Christmas morning make us
Happy to be thy children
And Christmas evening bring us
To our beds with grateful thoughts
Forgiving and forgiven
For Jesus sake

Amen.

A photograph of a desert landscape with a winding river and a small pool of water. The text is overlaid on the image.

Now to him who is able to keep you from stumbling and to present you blameless before the presence of his glory with great joy, to the only God, our Savior, through Jesus Christ our Lord, be glory, majesty, dominion, and authority, before all time and now and forever. Amen.

~ Jude 1:24-25

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To all of those who participated in the production of this Devotional Booklet – Thank You!. The result is a sharing of special talents, gifts from God, whether they are authoring daily meditations, providing artwork, organizing the writings, generating the computer version, or printing and assembling the finished product.*

“We are strengthened by these experiences to continue to live as God’s people”.

** cover artwork for this devotional has been provided by Elaine Wolf*

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