

Devotional Guide for Advent 2014

Thank you to all of those who have taken part in the creation of this devotional:

Les agradecemos a todos quienes tomaban parte en la creación de este devocional:

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***Bilingual*

English verses are from NRSV (US) / Nueva Versión Internacional

There are several days in Advent for which we haven't provided a reflection and suggest you create your own by reading the provided scripture for the day over several times, asking the Holy Spirit to speak to you – find the words or phrases that are most meaningful to you. Put something of yourself into your reflection – what do these words mean to you and why. End with a short prayer if you wish. Keep it fairly short. Share God's word to you with a friend or St. Christopher's for next year.

Las reflexiones en el resto de este folleto fueron creados por otros en o conectados con San Cristóbal. Pero he aquí la oportunidad de crear su propia reflexión.

Hay varios días en Adviento para los que no tenemos una reflexión y le sugerimos que cree su propia reflexión leyendo varias veces la Escritura proporcionada para el día, pidiendo al Espíritu Santo que le hable sobre las palabras o frases más significativas para usted. Haga personal su reflexión: ¿qué significan estas palabras para usted y por qué. Termine con una oración breve si lo desea. Manténgala bien breve. Comparte la Palabra de Dios con un amigo o San Cristóbal para el próximo año.

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Prepare daily by reading the scripture and advent reflection written by members and friends of St. Christopher's. Talk about them with each other and take a slow-down from the busy season. Advent is a time of preparation . . . a time to ready ourselves, and our congregation, for the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ at Christmas. We invite you to participate in St. Christopher's spiritual preparation this Advent. Advent is a season of prayer, reflection, repentance, anticipation, hope, and joy. May the Holy Spirit meet you as you set aside time for introspection, as you prepare to receive your Savior when he comes.

Prepare a diario leyendo la Escritura y la reflexión del Adviento escrita por los miembros y amigos de San Cristóbal de . Hábleles de ellas entre sí y vaya más despacio durante esta temporada ocupada. El Adviento es un tiempo de preparación . . . un tiempo en que nos preparamos y a nuestra congregación , para la venida de nuestro Señor Jesucristo en la Navidad. Le invitamos a participar en la preparación espiritual de San Cristóbal en este Adviento . El Adviento es un tiempo de oración , la reflexión , el arrepentimiento , la anticipación , la esperanza y la alegría. Que el Espíritu Santo esté con usted cuando usted reserve tiempo para la introspección, mientras se prepare para recibir a su Salvador cuando venga.

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Sun Nov 30 - Psalm 111 – Charlotte Powley

¹ Praise the LORD!

Happy are those who fear the LORD,
who greatly delight in his commandments.

² Their descendants will be mighty in the land;
the generation of the upright will be blessed.

³ Wealth and riches are in their houses,
and their righteousness endures forever.

⁴ They rise in the darkness as a light for the upright;
they are gracious, merciful, and righteous.

⁵ It is well with those who deal generously and lend,
who conduct their affairs with justice.

⁶ For the righteous will never be moved;
they will be remembered forever.

⁷ They are not afraid of evil tidings;
their hearts are firm, secure in the LORD.

⁸ Their hearts are steady, they will not be afraid;
in the end they will look in triumph on their foes.

⁹ They have distributed freely, they have given to the poor;
their righteousness endures forever;
their horn is exalted in honor.

¹⁰ The wicked see it and are angry;
they gnash their teeth and melt away;
the desire of the wicked comes to nothing.

The Psalm Begins

‘Keep me safe, my God.’ That’s what we all want, to be safe, to be comforted and to be protected. Next line - “for in thee do I put my trust”. That means we put our trust in God to look after us and guard us. But then we say we trust Him but we do not. In my prayers, I used to give God detailed instructions on exactly how I wanted my prayers answered. Then I discovered that sometimes my prayers were answered as I requested but that was not the right answer. So, now I have a little more trust and in my prayers, I ask to be protected and given the strength to deal with what happens.

It is just like when you give your child a task to do, but then if he does not do it fast enough for you, you do it yourself. Once you turn a question or problem over to God, you have to let it go. You

have to trust Him.

Lord, you alone are my portion and my cup; you make my lot secure. You make known to me the path of life; you will fill me with joy in your presence,

The end of the psalm reminds us to be thankful for and to recognize our blessings. Sometimes we do not recognize how blessed we are until we lose our joys. So, put your trust in God. Try to say "thank you" before you say "give me".

Mon Dec 1 - Mark 13:32-37 - Doreen Rohrer

³² "But about that day or hour no one knows, neither the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father. ³³ Beware, keep alert; for you do not know when the time will come. ³⁴ It is like a man going on a journey, when he leaves home and puts his slaves in charge, each with his work, and commands the doorkeeper to be on the watch. ³⁵ Therefore, keep awake—for you do not know when the master of the house will come, in the evening, or at midnight, or at cockcrow, or at dawn, ³⁶ or else he may find you asleep when he comes suddenly. ³⁷ And what I say to you I say to all: Keep awake."

No One Knows the Day or Hour

Reflecting on this passage brought many thoughts to me. First being I should always be aware that the Lord is coming back and we should live our lives, but keep that door always open to any and all possibilities in our lives. Live with a constant reminder that we have this time on earth for as long as Chris wants us to exist in a human state. Live to the fullest each day, be the one who lives by example. We are but the caretakers of this life.

There are ways you can watch. First, you can watch with fear. Many people do. Example; I always got home from school before my Mom. Her rules were no snacks before dinner, only a drink and then homework. I usually found something for a snack, but had to eat fast so that she did not know I broke her rule. Always watching the driveway in fear that she would arrive before I was finished with the snack I wasn't to have. Or I would walk home from school through the woods and that was not allowed also,

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always had to hurry, but it was so quiet and had so many things to see. Sometimes I didn't make it home before her. You can imagine the punishment I received?

Secondly, you can watch with hope. Hope that you can eat fast or wade through the creek without her noticing the wet shoes in your closet.

Now, please do not miss my point in all this. This is not a message about obeying your parents. This is a message about watching for Jesus to return. For once again, Jesus is going to return. You and I will meet him face to face one day. It may be many years from now, but it may also be tomorrow. It may be in the end times when he comes again, but it also may be the day you die and face him ahead of those of us left behind. Since none of us knows when, all of us must be ready now.

The thing is I do not believe Christ wants us to watch and wait in fear. I believe that Christ wants us to wait and watch with hope.

“Lord, thank you for allowing us to reflect on the Word. We await you with love in our hearts and hope in our smiles. Amen”

Tue Dec 2 - 1st Thessalonians 2:9-12 – Judy Schneider

⁹ You remember our labor and toil, brothers and sisters; we worked night and day, so that we might not burden any of you while we proclaimed to you the gospel of God. ¹⁰ You are witnesses, and God also, how pure, upright, and blameless our conduct was toward you believers. ¹¹ As you know, we dealt with each one of you like a father with his children, ¹² urging and encouraging you and pleading that you lead a life worthy of God, who calls you into his own kingdom and glory.

Proclamation of the Good News

But we must always give thanks to God for you, brothers and sisters beloved by the Lord, because God chose you as the first fruits for salvation through sanctification by the Spirit and through

belief in the truth. For this purpose he called you through our proclamation of the good news so that you may obtain the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ. So then, brothers and sisters, stand firm and hold fast to the traditions that you were taught by us, either by word of mouth or by our letter. Now may our Lord Jesus Christ himself and God our Father, who loved us and through grace gave us eternal comfort and good hope, comfort your hearts and strengthen them in every good work and word.

God chose you as the first fruits for salvation through sanctification by the Spirit and through belief in the truth.

Growing up Presbyterian, I was called into the Episcopal Church through “proclamation of the good news.” After doing an assigned paper on the 1539 Prayer Book for an English History class, I remarked to a friend that I thought the BCP was pretty cool and I’d like to know more about today’s version and the Episcopal Church. I didn’t know she was an Episcopalian. She made a long distance call to the Deacon assigned to our college as the Episcopal Chaplain. Two days later, he called on me in my dorm asking if I would be interested in an Inquirer’s Class. I said yes, and the rest is history. I was very impressed that she acted so quickly, that the Deacon acted so quickly, and that the Episcopal Church was this wonderful mixture of liturgy and thoughtful inquiry. I was home!

I have learned, and try to live that I work, pray, and give to “hold fast to the traditions” of Eucharist, welcoming, outreach, and community. Please be patient. God isn’t finished with me yet.

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Wed Dec 3 - Psalm 34:9-14 – Killy Balabanis

- ⁹ O fear the LORD, you his holy ones,
for those who fear him have no want.
- ¹⁰ The young lions suffer want and hunger,
but those who seek the LORD lack no good thing.
- ¹¹ Come, O children, listen to me;
I will teach you the fear of the LORD.
- ¹² Which of you desires life,
and covets many days to enjoy good?
- ¹³ Keep your tongue from evil,
and your lips from speaking deceit.
- ¹⁴ Depart from evil, and do good;
seek peace, and pursue it.

Putting Him in Charge

The psalmist (David) calls us to make a commitment to God in a real way. Verse 8 presents us with an invitation, “come, taste, and see.” But David means more than taking a sip to see if you might like it.

In the psalm, I do not think David is telling us to be afraid of God, as in the word “fear.” He is asking us to be in awe of Him, as it is beyond our comprehension in terms of how great God is. David is saying, if you are a believer, “you his holy ones”, live a life of goodness. As his descendant, Jesus taught us we are to treat others, as you would like to be treated.

By making a commitment to God, that is putting Him in charge, it is like letting Him put His arm around you so that you can feel His love and caring for you, so that He can help you through the dark places in your life, and so you can feel joy when things are good.

I confess I am still at the “taste” part of my relationship with the Lord, but I’m working on it. Advent is the perfect time to do so.

Psalm 34:9-14 – Killy Balabanis(translated)

⁹ Teman al SEÑOR, ustedes sus santos,
pues nada les falta a los que le temen.

¹⁰ Los leoncillos se debilitan y tienen hambre,
pero a los que buscan al SEÑOR nada les falta.

¹¹ Vengan, hijos míos, y escúchenme,
que voy a enseñarles el temor del SEÑOR.

¹² El que quiera amar la vida
y gozar de días felices,

¹³ que refrene su lengua de hablar el mal
y sus labios de proferir engaños;

¹⁴ que se aparte del mal y haga el bien;
que busque la *paz y la siga.

Vengan, gusten y vean

Vengan, gusten y vean

El salmista (David) nos llama a hacer un compromiso con Dios de una manera muy real. El versículo 8 nos presenta una invitación, “vengan, gusten y vean”. Pero David nos da a entender algo más que tomar un sorbito para ver si pudiera gustarnos.

En el salmo, yo no pienso que David nos está diciendo que estemos temerosos de Dios, como si usara la palabra “miedo”. David nos está pidiendo que estemos en profunda admiración de Dios, esto está más allá de nuestra comprensión en términos de qué tan grandioso es Dios. David está diciendo, si ustedes son creyentes, “sus consagrados”, vivan una vida de bondad. Como sus descendientes, Jesús nos enseña que debemos tratar a los demás como nosotros quisiéramos ser tratados.

Haciendo un compromiso con Dios, esto es poniéndolo a Él al cargo, es como dejarlo a Él poner Su brazo alrededor de ustedes para que puedan sentir Su amor y benevolencia por ustedes, de manera que Él pueda ayudarlos a través de los lugares oscuros de su vida y ustedes puedan sentir alegría cuando las cosas están bien.

Yo confieso que estoy aun en la parte “gusten” de mi relación con el Señor, pero estoy trabajando en esto. Adviento es el tiempo

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perfecto para hacer esto.

Thur Dec 6 - John 1:29-33 – Create Your Own

²⁹ The next day he saw Jesus coming toward him and declared, "Here is the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!" ³⁰ This is he of whom I said, 'After me comes a man who ranks ahead of me because he was before me.' ³¹ I myself did not know him; but I came baptizing with water for this reason, that he might be revealed to Israel." ³² And John testified, "I saw the Spirit descending from heaven like a dove, and it remained on him." ³³ I myself did not know him, but the one who sent me to baptize with water said to me, 'He on whom you see the Spirit descend and remain is the one who baptizes with the Holy Spirit.'

Please review the instructions in the front of this booklet.

²⁹ Al día siguiente Juan vio a Jesús que se acercaba a él, y dijo: «¡Aquí tienen al Cordero de Dios, que quita el pecado del mundo! ³⁰ De éste hablaba yo cuando dije: "Después de mí viene un hombre que es superior a mí, porque existía antes que yo." ³¹ Yo ni siquiera lo conocía, pero, para que él se revelara al pueblo de Israel, vine bautizando con agua.»

³² Juan declaró: «Vi al Espíritu descender del cielo como una paloma y permanecer sobre él. ³³ Yo mismo no lo conocía, pero el que me envió a bautizar con agua me dijo: "Aquel sobre quien veas que el Espíritu desciende y permanece, es el que bautiza con el Espíritu Santo."»

Favor de repasar las instrucciones al principio de este folleto.

Fri Dec 5 - Psalm 16 – Ron Dow

- ¹Protect me, O God, for in you I take refuge.
²I say to the LORD, "You are my Lord;
I have no good apart from you."
³*As for the holy ones in the land, they are the noble,
in whom is all my delight.*
⁴*Those who choose another god multiply their sorrows;
their drink offerings of blood I will not pour out
or take their names upon my lips.*
⁵*The LORD is my chosen portion and my cup;
you hold my lot.*
⁶*The boundary lines have fallen for me in pleasant places;
I have a goodly heritage.*
⁷*I bless the LORD who gives me counsel;
in the night also my heart instructs me.*
⁸*I keep the LORD always before me;
because he is at my right hand, I shall not be moved.*
⁹*Therefore my heart is glad, and my soul rejoices;
my body also rests secure.*
¹⁰*For you do not give me up to Sheol,
or let your faithful one see the Pit.*
¹¹*You show me the path of life.
In your presence there is fullness of joy;
in your right hand are pleasures forevermore.*

Preparing for Advent

Protect me, O God, for in you I take refuge. I say to the Lord, "You are my Lord; I have no good apart from you."

As for the holy ones in the land, they are the noble, in whom is all my delight. Those who choose another god multiply their sorrows; their drink offerings of blood I will not pour out or take their names upon my lips.

The Lord is my chosen portion and my cup; you hold my lot. The boundary lines have fallen for me in pleasant places; I have a goodly heritage.

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I bless the Lord who gives me counsel; in the night also my heart instructs me. I keep the Lord always before me; because he is at my right hand, I shall not be moved.

Therefore my heart is glad, and my soul rejoices; my body also rests secure. For you do not give me up to Sheol, or let your faithful one see the Pit.

You show me the path of life. In your presence there is fullness of joy; in your right hand are pleasures forevermore.

Advent—preparing for the coming of our Lord at Christmas. We prepare our hearts to receive Him and we wait with longing and love. His coming makes us think of others.

We Pray to rise to the life immortal through Him who reigneth, the Holy Ghost, now and forever. Throughout the season of Advent, we grant that we may hear Him, read, mark, and learn. O Lord, raise us up, we pray thee.

Sat Dec 6 - Luke 1 : 34-38 – Jean Liversidge

³⁴ Mary said to the angel, "How can this be, since I am a virgin?" ³⁵ The angel said to her, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore the child to be born will be holy; he will be called Son of God. ³⁶ And now, your relative Elizabeth in her old age has also conceived a son; and this is the sixth month for her who was said to be barren. ³⁷ For nothing will be impossible with God." ³⁸ Then Mary said, "Here am I, the servant of the Lord; let it be with me according to your word." Then the angel departed from her.

Here I am, Lord

Mary tells the angel that she is The Lord's servant. What comes to mind is one of my favorite hymns. "Here I am Lord." If you lead me I will follow.

So many of the decisions I have made during my life have been with my Lord's guidance. When my husband passed away, I

invited my oldest son along with his daughter and adopted son to move in with me. When he married, I moved into the apartment that had been my mother's. Then the time came and I decided, after a lot of praying, it would be best if they were on their own, and that I wanted the chance to make a new life for myself. So I moved to Arizona.

And now, once again after a lot of praying and asking for guidance, I find it is time for me to return to Connecticut where I am needed. "I have heard you calling in the night."

Psalm 34:9-14 – Jean Liversidge (translated)

³⁴ —¿Cómo podrá suceder esto —le preguntó María al ángel—, puesto que soy virgen?

³⁵ —El Espíritu Santo vendrá sobre ti, y el poder del Altísimo te cubrirá con su sombra. Así que al santo niño que va a nacer lo llamarán Hijo de Dios. ³⁶ También tu parienta Elisabet va a tener un hijo en su vejez; de hecho, la que decían que era estéril ya está en el sexto mes de embarazo. ³⁷ Porque para Dios no hay nada imposible.

³⁸ —Aquí tienes a la sierva del Señor —contestó María—. Que él haga conmigo como me has dicho.

Con esto, el ángel la dejó.

Aquí estoy, Señor

María le dice al ángel que ella es la esclava del Señor.

Lo que viene a mi mente es uno de mis cantos de alabanza favoritos. "Aquí estoy Señor" Si Tu me guías yo te seguiré.

Muchas de las decisiones que yo he hecho durante mi vida han sido con la guía de mi Señor.

Cuando mi esposo murió, yo invité a mi hijo el mayor junto con su hija y su hijo adoptivo, a vivir conmigo. Cuando él se casó, yo me mudé al departamento que había sido de mi madre. Entonces vino un tiempo en el que decidí, después de mucha oración, que sería lo mejor que ellos estuvieran con ellos mismos, y yo quería la

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oportunidad de hacer una nueva vida por mi misma. Entonces me mude a Arizona.

Y ahora, una vez más después de mucha oración y de pedir Su guía, yo pienso que es tiempo para mí de regresar a Connecticut donde ahora me necesitan. “Yo te he oído llamando en la noche”.

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Sun Dec 7 - 2 Peter 3:11-18 – Mona Guarino

¹¹ Since all these things are to be dissolved in this way, what sort of persons ought you to be in leading lives of holiness and godliness, ¹² waiting for and hastening the coming of the day of God, because of which the heavens will be set ablaze and dissolved, and the elements will melt with fire? ¹³ But, in accordance with his promise, we wait for new heavens and a new earth, where righteousness is at home.

¹⁴ Therefore, beloved, while you are waiting for these things, strive to be found by him at peace, without spot or blemish; ¹⁵ and regard the patience of our Lord as salvation. So also our beloved brother Paul wrote to you according to the wisdom given him, ¹⁶ speaking of this as he does in all his letters. There are some things in them hard to understand, which the ignorant and unstable twist to their own destruction, as they do the other scriptures. ¹⁷ You therefore, beloved, since you are forewarned, beware that you are not carried away with the error of the lawless and lose your own stability. ¹⁸ But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To him be the glory both now and to the day of eternity. Amen.

Stay the Course . . .

... while you are waiting for these things, strive to be found by him at peace, without spot or blemish ...

The world as we know it will end and a new world, one centered in righteousness will begin. But first ... Until then ... How should we act?

Do not be misled as the lawless, but, instead, whether you understand or not, remain faithful. Be patient. Strive to be without sin. Be centered. We have no way to know when the day of the Lord will come like a thief, so we must strive always to be ready.

May we grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. May we prepare together for the coming of a new kingdom. May we avoid false teaching and anticipate the final triumph in the eternal kingdom.

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Mon Dec 8 - Thessalonians 5:8,10-11 – Amy Schultz

⁸ But since we belong to the day, let us be sober, and put on the breastplate of faith and love, and for a helmet the hope of salvation. ¹⁰ who died for us, so that whether we are awake or asleep we may live with him. ¹¹ Therefore encourage one another and build up each other, as indeed you are doing.

Encourage One Another

Let us be self-controlled, putting on faith and love as a breastplate and the hope of salvation as a helmet. Christ died for us so that, whether we are awake or asleep, we may live together with him. Therefore, encourage one another and build each other up, just as in fact you are doing.

“...build each other up, just as in fact you are doing.” At St. Christopher’s we do encourage and build each other up. What I feel at St. Christopher’s, from the people that I talk to often and those I meet occasionally on a Sunday, is encouragement and love. The body of Christ in this place is a warm one, with both smiles of love and concern for one another and the community around us. I see encouragement and a “building up” of the community in which St. Christopher’s exists. We feed the hungry, the hungry children at Cheyenne School. And we give warmth to patients at the hospital with our handmade lap robes. We also send cards to encourage each other and, cards to foster children.

My church, St. Christopher’s, is Christ’s beating heart of love for each of us in both congregations and for the world around us.

I have been encouraged by the Women’s Bible Study participants, friends at church who call and ask how I am doing, Father Peter’s sermons, and the warm response of us so-called “old People” to the songs the children sing at vacation Bible School.

In addition, I have been greatly encouraged by the ladies from the second service who regularly show up to help sew blankets for Linus Project Children.

“Jesus died for us so that whether awake or asleep we may live

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together with Him.” As we go through Advent, may we all remember that Christ is in our midst, encouraging us to be encouragers, and smiling at us as we do so. May we pause in this sacred season to listen to Him, pause to feel His love for us, and pause to remember that we have the hope of salvation.

Tue Dec 9 - Psalm 28:6-9 – Gene Carbaugh

⁶ Blessed be the LORD,
for he has heard the sound of my pleadings.
⁷ The LORD is my strength and my shield;
in him my heart trusts;
so I am helped, and my heart exults,
and with my song I give thanks to him.
⁸ The LORD is the strength of his people;
he is the saving refuge of his anointed.
⁹ O save your people, and bless your heritage;
be their shepherd, and carry them forever.

A Prayer for Deliverance

“Bless be the Lord! For He has heard the voice of my supplications. The Lord is my strength and my shield; in Him my heart trusts; so I am helped, and my heart exults, and with my song I give thanks to Him.”

My commentary advises that this Psalm is a prayer for deliverance from personal enemies. The verses cited above were the psalmist’s response to an oracle of assurance delivered by a priest or a temple prophet. With thanksgiving we acknowledge that the Lord has rewarded our trust in Him and answered our supplication.

“The Lord is the strength of His people; He is the saving refuge of his anointed. O save Thy people, and bless Thy heritage; be Thou their shepherd, and carry them forever.”

As we approach Advent, we cry out in supplication again for the Lord to save us, to be our shepherd, and carry us forever. We trust

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in the Lord to answer our prayers for deliverance, perhaps not from personal enemies but from a world of brokenness, division, and hurts. We look for a shepherd to carry us forever.

That deliverance will come forth with the birth of Jesus with which we eagerly anticipate the Advent season. Then we will join with the psalmist and give thanks with our songs and exultation.

Tue Dec 9 - Psalm 28:6-9 – Gene Carbaugh [translated]

⁶ Bendito sea el SEÑOR,
que ha oído mi voz suplicante.
⁷ El SEÑOR es mi fuerza y mi escudo;
mi corazón en él confía;
de él recibo ayuda.
Mi corazón salta de alegría,
y con cánticos le daré gracias.
⁸ El SEÑOR es la fortaleza de su pueblo,
y un baluarte de *salvación para su *ungido.
⁹ Salva a tu pueblo, bendice a tu heredad,
y cual *pastor guíalos por siempre.

Una oración por la liberación

“¡Bendito sea el Señor que escuchó mi voz suplicante! El Señor es mi fuerza y mi escudo: en Él confía mi corazón. Me socorrió y mi corazón se alegra; le doy gracias con mi cántico.”

Mi comentario sugiere que este Salmo es una oración para la liberación de enemigos personales. Los versículos citados arriba fueron la respuesta del salmista a un profeta que entregaba una certeza para un sacerdote o un profeta del templo. Con agradecimiento nosotros reconocemos que el Señor ha recompensado nuestra confianza en Él y ha contestado nuestra súplica.

“El Señor es la fuerza de su pueblo, un refugio seguro para su ungido. ¡Salva a tu pueblo y bendice a los tuyos; pastoréalos y llévalos por siempre!”

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Mientras nos aproximamos a Adviento, nosotros alzamos la voz en una súplica una vez más para que el Señor nos salve, que sea nuestro pastor y nos sostenga por siempre. Nosotros confiamos en el Señor que contesta nuestras oraciones para liberarnos; a lo mejor no de nuestros enemigos personales, pero si de un mundo de rompimiento, división y dolores. Nosotros buscamos un pastor que nos sostenga por siempre.

Esa liberación vendrá con el nacimiento de Jesús el cual anticipamos ansiosamente en la época de Adviento. Entonces nos regocijaremos con el salmista y daremos gracias con nuestros cánticos y alegría.

Wed Dec 10 – Psalm 103 – Jane Meyers

¹ Bless the LORD, O my soul,
and all that is within me,
bless his holy name.

² Bless the LORD, O my soul,
and do not forget all his benefits—

³ who forgives all your iniquity,
who heals all your diseases,

⁴ who redeems your life from the Pit,
who crowns you with steadfast love and mercy,

⁵ who satisfies you with good as long as you live
so that your youth is renewed like the eagle's.

⁶ The LORD works vindication
and justice for all who are oppressed.

⁷ He made known his ways to Moses,
his acts to the people of Israel.

⁸ The LORD is merciful and gracious,
slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love.

⁹ He will not always accuse,
nor will he keep his anger forever.

¹⁰ He does not deal with us according to our sins,
nor repay us according to our iniquities.

¹¹ For as the heavens are high above the earth,
so great is his steadfast love toward those who fear him;

¹² as far as the east is from the west,

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so far he removes our transgressions from us.
¹³ As a father has compassion for his children,
so the LORD has compassion for those who fear him.
¹⁴ For he knows how we were made;
he remembers that we are dust.

¹⁵ As for mortals, their days are like grass;
they flourish like a flower of the field;
¹⁶ for the wind passes over it, and it is gone,
and its place knows it no more.
¹⁷ But the steadfast love of the LORD is from everlasting to everlasting
on those who fear him,
and his righteousness to children's children,
¹⁸ to those who keep his covenant
and remember to do his commandments.

¹⁹ The LORD has established his throne in the heavens,
and his kingdom rules over all.
²⁰ Bless the LORD, O you his angels,
you mighty ones who do his bidding,
obedient to his spoken word.
²¹ Bless the LORD, all his hosts,
his ministers that do his will.
²² Bless the LORD, all his works,
in all places of his dominion.
Bless the Lord, O my soul.

Counting my Blessings

This passage speaks to me because it hits me where I live, and where I died. There are not enough hours in the day for me to count my blessings.

On Palm Sunday 2012, I suffered ventricular fibrillations, collapsed, and died in the SCW Safeway parking lot. (My daughter and I refer to this as Resurrection Safeway.) After the haze of emergency treatment, angiogram, and placing of a pacemaker/defibrillator, I began to question "Why?" Not why did it happen to me, but why did I survive. What does God have for me to do?

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I know I'm encompassed by his love and that he has healed my body through the doctors and my soul through prayers. I am blessed, and I bless the Lord continually for the angel who appeared to give me CPR and disappeared when the EMTs arrived. For the EMT's who stayed at the hospital until I fully recovered. For my family and friends who gave me such love and support.

My blessings continue as I bless the Lord for all he has done. I cannot "forget not all his benefits." I have obviously been forgiven and healed but still wonder "Why?" As I bless the Lord, each day is brighter and I am filled with the joy of living my life to the fullest, knowing He will make known His plan for me in His time. I will patiently count my blessings 'til then.

Fri Dec 12 – John 1:9-13 – Frieda Spann

⁹ The true light, which enlightens everyone, was coming into the world.

¹⁰ He was in the world, and the world came into being through him; yet the world did not know him. ¹¹ He came to what was his own, and his own people did not accept him. ¹² But to all who received him, who believed in his name, he gave power to become children of God, ¹³ who were born, not of blood or of the will of the flesh or of the will of man, but of God.

Trust and Give Thanks

Upon reading this scripture, I felt as if my life had really changed since I had found the peace that I needed in God. "I will trust and will not be afraid for the Lord God is my strength and my salvation." In this scripture, it mentions God being angry; I do not believe that God gets angry with us. I believe that he is disappointed sometimes, but never angry. I thank God every day for the many blessings that he has given me and they are many.

I try to give thanks every day to the Lord and tell people how much better I feel with God in my life. And I hope that maybe they can also find peace and contentment in the Lord.

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Sat Dec 13 – Isaiah 61:1-4 – Bonnie Franco

² Devote yourselves to prayer, keeping alert in it with thanksgiving. ³ At the same time pray for us as well that God will open to us a door for the word, that we may declare the mystery of Christ, for which I am in prison, ⁴ so that I may reveal it clearly, as I should.

⁵ Conduct yourselves wisely toward outsiders, making the most of the time. ⁶ Let your speech always be gracious, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how you ought to answer everyone.

Preach the Good News

This particular reading is very enthusiastic and as I read it, I feel it is another example of the Good News I reflected on in the book of Mark.

Isaiah starts by saying he has been anointed by the Lord to preach good news. He states the Spirit of the Sovereign Lord is upon him. Can you imagine having that experience and not being excited?

Isaiah was instructed to address the poor, bind up the brokenhearted, help the captives, release prisoners of darkness, and proclaim the year of the Lord's favor. Isaiah was told to comfort those who mourn, provide for those who grieve with a crown of beauty instead of ashes. He was to use the oil of gladness instead of mourning and have garments of praise instead of a spirit of despair. Everything took on a positive attitude and favorable promise through the love of God. The people would become oaks of righteousness...as a planting of the Lord and they would be a display of His splendor. Isaiah shared with the people that the Lord asked they rebuild and restore the ruined cities and ancient ruins.

I find it interesting to learn a portion of this same scripture is repeated by Jesus in Luke 4: 17-21. It is describing His ministry of healing, forgiveness, and salvation through seeking God. Isn't that fantastic news?

Basically, if we don't turn to Christ Jesus and become one of His beloved, we are in perpetual bondage to sin. The good news is God

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is always faithful and always available to us. He wants us to need Him. He loves us beyond our limited imagination. I believe God loves us not because of how we act or who we are but because of whom He is. His love is unconditional and constant. How blessed are we!!!

During this Advent season, I am looking forward to celebrating the birth of Christ. He is here today and will come again in power to rule with truth, justice, and righteousness.

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Sun Dec 14 – Psalm 103:1-4 – Doris Schoeben

Bless the LORD, O my soul,
and all that is within me,
bless his holy name.

² Bless the LORD, O my soul,
and do not forget all his benefits—

³ who forgives all your iniquity,
who heals all your diseases,

⁴ who redeems your life from the Pit,
who crowns you with steadfast love and mercy,

Jesus is the Reason

He forgives all your sins and heals all your infirmities; He redeems your life from the grave and crowns you with mercy and loving-kindness; He satisfies you with good things, and your youth is renewed like an eagle's.

The LORD executes righteousness and judgment for all who are oppressed. He made his ways known to Moses and his works to the children of Israel. The LORD is full of compassion and mercy, slow to anger and of great kindness. He will not always accuse us, nor will he keep his anger forever.

He has not dealt with us according to our sins, nor rewarded us according to our wickedness. For as the heavens are high above the earth, so is his mercy great upon those who fear him.

As far as the east is from the west, so far has he removed our sins from us. As a father cares for his children, so does the LORD care for those who fear him.

For he himself knows whereof we are made; he remembers that we are but dust. Our days are like the grass; we flourish like a flower of the field; When the wind goes over it, it is gone, and its place shall know it no more.

But the merciful goodness of the LORD endures forever on those who fear him, and his righteousness on children's children; On those who keep his covenant and remember his commandments and do them. The LORD has set his throne in heaven, and his

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kingship has dominion over all.

Bless the LORD, you angels of his, you mighty ones who do his bidding, and hearken to the voice of his word. Bless the LORD, all you his hosts, you ministers of his who do his will. Bless the LORD, all you works of his, in all places of his dominion; bless the LORD, O my soul.

Each Advent Season, as I drive east on Peoria Avenue to St. Christopher's, I read a sign someone in one of the condominiums has placed near the sidewalk: "Put Christ back in Christmas." Another says, "Jesus is the reason for the season."

Of course, we know what Advent is all about. We mark the season in purple as directed by the *Ordo Kalendar*, dress the altar and the celebrant and sub deacon in purple, light each candle on the Advent Wreath each Sunday leading up to Christmas Eve, look forward to singing carols and receiving gifts from St. Nicholas, who has morphed into a chubby, jolly Santa Claus, and who I suspect doesn't have a red nose just from the cold. The only thing missing here is the snow.

And yet that all seems to pale when we read the psalms and realize that we receive the greatest gift of all on Christmas Eve every year and every day of every year from our Heavenly Father. Jesus IS the reason for the season. Need I say more?

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Mon Dec 15 – Isaiah 40: 28-31 – Create Your Own

²⁸ Have you not known? Have you not heard?
The LORD is the everlasting God,
the Creator of the ends of the earth.
He does not faint or grow weary;
his understanding is unsearchable.

²⁹ He gives power to the faint,
and strengthens the powerless.

³⁰ Even youths will faint and be weary,
and the young will fall exhausted;

³¹ but those who wait for the LORD shall renew their strength,
they shall mount up with wings like eagles,
they shall run and not be weary,
they shall walk and not faint.

Please review the instructions in the front of this booklet.

²⁸ ¿Acaso no lo sabes?
¿Acaso no te has enterado?
El Señor es el Dios eterno,
creador de los confines de la tierra.
No se cansa ni se fatiga,
y su inteligencia es insondable.

²⁹ Él fortalece al cansado
y acrecienta las fuerzas del débil.

³⁰ Aun los jóvenes se cansan, se fatigan,
y los muchachos tropiezan y caen;

³¹ pero los que confían en el Señor
renovarán sus fuerzas;
volarán como las águilas:
correrán y no se fatigarán,
caminarán y no se cansarán.

Favor de repasar las instrucciones al principio de este folleto.

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Tue Dec 16 - Psalm 30 – Don McCune

- ¹ I will extol you, O LORD, for you have drawn me up,
and did not let my foes rejoice over me.
- ² O LORD my God, I cried to you for help,
and you have healed me.
- ³ O LORD, you brought up my soul from Sheol,
restored me to life from among those gone down to the Pit.
- ⁴ Sing praises to the LORD, O you his faithful ones,
and give thanks to his holy name.
- ⁵ For his anger is but for a moment;
his favor is for a lifetime.
Weeping may linger for the night,
but joy comes with the morning.
- ⁶ As for me, I said in my prosperity,
“I shall never be moved.”
- ⁷ By your favor, O LORD,
you had established me as a strong mountain;
you hid your face;
I was dismayed.
- ⁸ To you, O LORD, I cried,
and to the LORD I made supplication:
- ⁹ “What profit is there in my death,
if I go down to the Pit?
Will the dust praise you?
Will it tell of your faithfulness?”
- ¹⁰ Hear, O LORD, and be gracious to me!
O LORD, be my helper!”
- ¹¹ You have turned my mourning into dancing;
you have taken off my sackcloth
and clothed me with joy,
¹² so that my soul may praise you and not be silent.
O LORD my God, I will give thanks to you forever.

God is Faithful

These words carried me through the shadow of death thirty-seven years ago when I was almost killed on the railroad. “Joy comes in the morning” and why was my life saved? “My blood required of

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me? Who would give you praise?" I was in more pain than I have ever experienced. Some nights were very long. But as I remember it, my weeping was because Jesus was so close. Others would say 'oh, it's the drugs that cause him to cry.' But I know it was the close feeling of Jesus standing by my bed. Another was "God is faithful and will not require anything more than you can endure that with the suffering, God will provide a way of escape. If you raise your thinking above it (the pain) to be close to Jesus."

Wed Dec 17 - Mark 1:1-8 – Bonnie Franco

³⁴ Mary said to the angel, "How can this be, since I am a virgin?" ³⁵ The angel said to her, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore the child to be born will be holy; he will be called Son of God. ³⁶ And now, your relative Elizabeth in her old age has also conceived a son; and this is the sixth month for her who was said to be barren. ³⁷ For nothing will be impossible with God." ³⁸ Then Mary said, "Here am I, the servant of the Lord; let it be with me according to your word." Then the angel departed from her.

The Good News!

The season of Advent is not that far away so it is not too much of a stretch to ponder on the above scripture that has become a special favorite of mine.

Although John, the Baptist, gives credit to the prophet Isaiah, it is the beginning of the good news of the coming of Jesus the messiah, the Son of God. While thinking of preparing for the Advent season and the birth of Christ Jesus, I think of this passage and marvel at it's importance to all Christians.

John, an emphatic believer, goes into the wilderness to proclaim the baptism that includes repentance and forgiveness of sins. The whole countryside went out to him. They were baptized in the Jordan River by John and told another will come more powerful than him. He was humble claiming he, John, was not worthy to untying the sandals of Jesus. John told the people Jesus would

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baptize them with the Holy Spirit.

John was popular, an effective speaker, and the people responded to him. They confessed their sins to him and were baptized by him. Baptism was not a new invention. It was a well-known symbol, an outward sign of a new spiritual birth, of entering a new form of life.

An example of John's humility was demonstrated, as he professed, "It is not about me." John did his job well, always promoted the coming of our savior, Jesus Christ.

I think about what that has meant to me. God has revealed He is for us. We are free to confess our sins and free to accept God's forgiveness, through the death of Jesus on the cross. We can surrender ourselves to God completely, knowing we are safe in His love.

I believe the Holy Spirit dwells within us and is the conduit to God's love, direction, forgiveness, and protection.

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Thur Dec 18 – 2 Corinthians 1:3-7 – Create Your Own

³ Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and the God of all consolation, ⁴ who consoles us in all our affliction, so that we may be able to console those who are in any affliction with the consolation with which we ourselves are consoled by God. ⁵ For just as the sufferings of Christ are abundant for us, so also our consolation is abundant through Christ.

Please review the instructions in the front of this booklet.

³ Alabado sea el Dios y Padre de nuestro Señor Jesucristo, Padre misericordioso y Dios de toda consolación, ⁴ quien nos consuela en todas nuestras tribulaciones para que con el mismo consuelo que de Dios hemos recibido, también nosotros podamos consolar a todos los que sufren. ⁵ Pues así como participamos abundantemente en los sufrimientos de Cristo, así también por medio de él tenemos abundante consuelo. ⁶ Si sufrimos, es para que ustedes tengan consuelo y salvación; y si somos consolados, es para que ustedes tengan el consuelo que los ayude a soportar con paciencia los mismos sufrimientos que nosotros padecemos. ⁷ Firme es la esperanza que tenemos en cuanto a ustedes, porque sabemos que así como participan de nuestros sufrimientos, así también participan de nuestro consuelo.

Favor de repasar las instrucciones al principio de este folleto.

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Thur Dec 18 – Luke 1:46-55 – Barbara Fabre

⁴⁷“My soul magnifies the Lord,
⁴⁷ and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior,
⁴⁸ for he has looked with favor on the lowliness of his servant.
Surely, from now on all generations will call me blessed;
⁴⁹ for the Mighty One has done great things for me,
and holy is his name.
⁵⁰ His mercy is for those who fear him
from generation to generation.
⁵¹ He has shown strength with his arm;
he has scattered the proud in the thoughts of their hearts.
⁵² He has brought down the powerful from their thrones,
and lifted up the lowly;
⁵³ he has filled the hungry with good things,
and sent the rich away empty.
⁵⁴ He has helped his servant Israel,
in remembrance of his mercy,
⁵⁵ according to the promise he made to our ancestors,
to Abraham and to his descendants forever.”

Mary's Song

And Mary said, “My soul magnifies the Lord, and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior, for he has looked with favor on the lowliness of his servant. Surely, from now on all generations will call me blessed; for the Mighty One has done great things for me, and holy is his name.

His mercy is for those who fear him from generation to generation. He has shown strength with his arm; he has scattered the proud in the thoughts of their hearts. He has brought down the powerful from their thrones, and lifted up the lowly; He has filled the hungry with good things, and sent the rich away empty.

He has helped his servant Israel, in remembrance of his mercy, according to the promise he made to our ancestors, to Abraham and to his descendants forever.”

Mary's Song is such a beautiful piece of scripture. For being such a young maiden, Mary was truly wise. I remember when I found out I was going to have a baby, how my emotions ranged from

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delight to fear. I was so thankful to know that I was going to bring a new life into the world and at the same time scared to death that I might not be a good nurturing mother. I can't fathom how Mary must have felt knowing that she was carrying the Son of God. She knew of God's promises to her people and what her baby was going to do to fulfill those promises. What a responsibility!

With God's help, I was a pretty good mother and I thank him for all his guidance. With Mary's strong faith and trust in the Lord, she was the Perfect Mother for God's Son.

Jueves 18 Dic – Lucas 1:46-55 – Barbara Fabre[translated]

⁴⁶ Entonces dijo María:

— Mi alma glorifica al Señor,

⁴⁷ y mi espíritu se regocija en Dios mi Salvador,

⁴⁸ porque se ha dignado fijarse en su humilde sierva.

Desde ahora me llamarán *dichosa todas las generaciones,

⁴⁹ porque el Poderoso ha hecho grandes cosas por mí.

¡Santo es su nombre!

⁵⁰ De generación en generación

se extiende su misericordia a los que le temen.

⁵¹ Hizo proezas con su brazo;

desbarató las intrigas de los soberbios.

⁵² De sus tronos derrocó a los poderosos,

mientras que ha exaltado a los humildes.

⁵³ A los hambrientos los colmó de bienes,

y a los ricos los despidió con las manos vacías.

⁵⁴⁻⁵⁵ Acudió en ayuda de su siervo Israel

y, cumpliendo su promesa a nuestros padres,

mostró su misericordia a Abraham

y a su descendencia para siempre.

El Cántico de la Virgen María

Y María dijo, "Mi alma glorifica al Señor, y mi espíritu se regocija en Dios mi Salvador, porque se ha dignado fijarse en su humilde sierva. Desde ahora me llamarán dichosa todas las generaciones, porque el Poderoso ha hecho grandes cosas por mí. ¡Santo es su nombre! De generación en generación se extiende su misericordia

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a los que le temen. Hizo proezas con su brazo; desbarató las intrigas de los soberbios. De sus tronos derrocó a los poderosos, mientras que ha exaltado a los humildes. A los hambrientos los colmó de bienes, y a los ricos los despidió con las manos vacías. Acudió en ayuda de su siervo Israel y, cumpliendo su promesa a nuestros padres, mostró su misericordia a Abraham y a su descendencia para siempre.”

El Cántico de María es tan hermosa pieza de escritura. Aunque era una doncella tan joven, María era verdaderamente sabia. Recuerdo que cuando descubrí que iba a tener un bebé, cómo mis emociones oscilaron entre deleite y miedo. Yo estaba tan agradecida de saber que iba a traer una nueva vida al mundo, y al mismo tiempo asustada casi hasta la muerte que tal vez no podría ser una buena madre. No puedo comprender cómo María debe haber sentido al saber que ella llevaba el Hijo de Dios. Ella sabía de las promesas de Dios a su pueblo y lo que su bebé iba a hacer para cumplir esas promesas. ¡Qué responsabilidad!

Con la ayuda de Dios, yo era bastante buena madre y yo le doy gracias por toda su ayuda. Con la fuerte fe de María y su confianza en el Señor, ella era la madre perfecta para el Hijo de Dios.

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Fri Dec 19 – 1 Peter 1:3-9 – by Bill & Carol Masters, Doris Schoeben, & Carrie Wetzel

³ Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! By his great mercy he has given us a new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, ⁴ and into an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you, ⁵ who are being protected by the power of God through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time. ⁶ In this you rejoice, even if now for a little while you have had to suffer various trials, ⁷ so that the genuineness of your faith—being more precious than gold that, though perishable, is tested by fire—may be found to result in praise and glory and honor when Jesus Christ is revealed. ⁸ Although you have not seen him, you love him; and even though you do not see him now, you believe in him and rejoice with an indescribable and glorious joy, ⁹ for you are receiving the outcome of your faith, the salvation of your souls.

Christmas Gifts

The great Gift of Christmas is everlasting life through our Lord Jesus Christ. Advent is our time to contemplate the arrival of Jesus into our lives. He is the Gift that God our Father gave us. Because of this gift, we now have rich blessings waiting for us in Heaven. In this life, we know we will have trials to endure. Just as gold needs its impurities to be burned off, so we need to go through our own fires, our own disappointments before receiving our blessings in Heaven.

As children, we expected to receive gifts on Christmas. The weeks prior to Christmas, we did our best to be good, to do our chores every day, and to do all of our schoolwork. We hoped this would earn us many gifts under our tree. Now we know we cannot earn our gifts. They are freely given to us by God and kept safe for us through Jesus Christ.

Giving gifts at Christmas is a way for us to show our love to those around us. God gave us the Gift of His Son to show us the love He has for us. We receive many gifts from God throughout our lives, but the greatest is eternal life with Him.

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Sat Dec 20 - John 4:7-14 – Gary Welsh

7 A Samaritan woman came to draw water, and Jesus said to her, "Give me a drink."⁸ (His disciples had gone to the city to buy food.)⁹ The Samaritan woman said to him, "How is it that you, a Jew, ask a drink of me, a woman of Samaria?" (Jews do not share things in common with Samaritans.)¹⁰ Jesus answered her, "If you knew the gift of God, and who it is that is saying to you, 'Give me a drink,' you would have asked him, and he would have given you living water."¹¹ The woman said to him, "Sir, you have no bucket, and the well is deep. Where do you get that living water?"¹² Are you greater than our ancestor Jacob, who gave us the well, and with his sons and his flocks drank from it?"¹³ Jesus said to her, "Everyone who drinks of this water will be thirsty again,¹⁴ but those who drink of the water that I will give them will never be thirsty. The water that I will give will become in them a spring of water gushing up to eternal life."

The Living Water

On the way he came to the Samaritan town called Sychar, near the land that Jacob gave to his son Joseph. Jacob's well is there and Jesus, tired by the journey, sat straight down by the well. It was about the sixth hour. When a Samaritan woman came to draw water, Jesus said to her, 'Give me a drink'. His disciples had gone into the town to buy food. The Samaritan woman said to him, 'What? You are a Jew and you ask me, a Samaritan, for a drink?'—Jews, in fact, do not associate with Samaritans.

Jesus replied: 'If you only knew what God is offering and who it is that is saying to you: give me a drink, you would have been the one to ask, and he would have given you living water'.

'You have no bucket, sir,' she answered, and the well is deep: how could you get this living water? Are you a greater man than our father Jacob who gave us this well and drank from it himself with his sons and his cattle?'

Jesus replied: 'Whoever drinks this water will get thirsty again; but anyone who drinks the water that I shall give will never be thirsty again; the water that I shall give will turn into a spring inside him, welling up to eternal live'.

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At the age of seven I went to the circus with my mother. A clown was waving pink cotton candy attached to a stick at the bleachers. I begged my mother for one. She told me that she was fixing a special desert for dinner, and would rather I wait for it. I kept on begging until she gave in. I remember that pink stuff being sticky, sweet and good, good, good. That night my family ate my favorite desert, bread pudding with raisins and milk, while I lay upstairs sick of cotton candy.

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Sun Dec 21 - John 3:16-21 – John Kennedy

¹⁶ “For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life.

¹⁷ “Indeed, God did not send the Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him.

¹⁸ Those who believe in him are not condemned; but those who do not believe are condemned already, because they have not believed in the name of the only Son of God. ¹⁹ And this is the judgment, that the light has come into the world, and people loved darkness rather than light because their deeds were evil. ²⁰ For all who do evil hate the light and do not come to the light, so that their deeds may not be exposed. ²¹ But those who do what is true come to the light, so that it may be clearly seen that their deeds have been done in God.”

Pay it Forward

“Pay it forward” is what it is all about!

Paying it forward is what these verses say to me. When my sister got divorced, I welcomed her and her children into my home. I had a large home, but no longer be living by myself was an adjustment. When my sister was in a position to pay me rent, I told her to pay it forward, to help someone else.

Once a teenage boy was ahead of me in the checkout line and he wanted a set of colored markers. He did not have enough money so I helped him make the purchase with my pocket change. A small action but one that helped.

My friend Melanie invited me into her home when I lost my place of employment and housing. I have lived in her home for seven years now, helping her with her father’s illness, and now taking care of her as she battles cancer.

I have to take the first step to make it positive and pay it forward. The people I share this with might be someone I know or a total stranger. We all are, in general, good people. God has planted this in all of us. We are all sowing the seed of love that Christ has put in us.

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There are so many distractions, I often find it hard to be aware of others needs. But the best thing is pleasing Christ, making Him happy. Christ is such a gentleman and at Advent, I remember His Birth and how He paid it forward for me and all of us.

Mon Dec 22 - Salmo 61 – Gina Rocha

- ¹ Oh Dios, escucha mi clamor
y atiende a mi oración.
- ² Desde los confines de la tierra te invoco,
pues mi *corazón desfallece;
Ilévame a una roca donde esté yo a salvo.
- ³ Porque tú eres mi refugio,
mi baluarte contra el enemigo.
- ⁴ Anhele habitar en tu casa para siempre
y refugiarme debajo de tus alas.*Selah
- ⁵ Tú, oh Dios, has aceptado mis votos
y me has dado la heredad de quienes te honran.
- ⁶ Concédele al rey más años de vida;
que sean sus días una eternidad.
- ⁷ Que reine siempre en tu presencia,
y que tu amor y tu verdad lo protejan.
- ⁸ Así cantaré siempre salmos a tu *nombre
y cumpliré mis votos día tras día.

Dios atiende a mi oración

Las dulces palabras del Salmo 61 son una plegaria serena pero fuerte.

Dios quiere que le oremos, quiere que lo busquemos, cuando le oramos dondequiera que estemos, quienquiera que seamos, sin importar las circunstancias, aunque pensemos que no somos dignos de su respuesta, El escucha.

En tiempos difíciles sólo en Dios podemos confiar. El está atento a nuestras súplicas.

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No hay pecado que no pueda perdonar ni problema que no pueda resolver. Debemos de estar seguros del inmenso amor que Dios tiene para nosotros y que siempre estará ahí para consolarnos.

Si oramos con un corazón humilde, sincero y arrepentido va a escuchar nuestras plegarias. Este Salmo nos demuestra el poder de la oración en los momentos más difíciles.

La oración brota de la fe en Dios

La oración nos sostiene a través de las experiencias pasadas.
La oración nos da confianza.

Qué el amor de Dios permanezca en cada uno de nosotros.

Mon Dec 22 - Psalm 61 – Gina Rocha [translated]

¹ Hear my cry, O God;
listen to my prayer.

² From the end of the earth I call to you,
when my heart is faint.

Lead me to the rock
that is higher than I;

³ for you are my refuge,
a strong tower against the enemy.

⁴ Let me abide in your tent forever,
find refuge under the shelter of your wings. Selah

⁵ For you, O God, have heard my vows;
you have given me the heritage of those who fear your name.

⁶ Prolong the life of the king;
may his years endure to all generations!

⁷ May he be enthroned forever before God;
appoint steadfast love and faithfulness to watch over him!

⁸ So I will always sing praises to your name,
as I pay my vows day after day.

God is Attentive to our Prayers

The sweet words of psalm 61 are a quiet prayer but at the same time strong.

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The verses 1 to 5 say:

God, hear my cry, listen to my prayer.

From the end of the earth I call to you with fainting heart. Lead me to the high rock that stands far out of my reach.

For you are my refuge, a strong tower against the enemy.

Let me stay in your tent forever, taking refuge in the shelter of your wings!

God wants us to pray to Him; He wants us to look for him when we pray to Him wherever we are, whoever we are, without paying attention to the circumstances. Even if we think that we are not worthy of His answer, He listens.

In difficult times, only in God we can trust. He is attentive to our prayers. There is no sin that He cannot forgive or a problem that He cannot solve. We ought be sure of the great love that God has for us and that He always is going to be there to comfort us.

If we pray with a humble, sincere and repentant heart, He will hear our prayers. This psalm shows us the power of prayer in our most difficult times.

Prayer comes from faith in God.

Prayer sustains us through past experiences.

Prayer gives us confidence.

May the love of God remain in each of us.

Tue Dec 23 - Luke 1:67-80 – Joanne Mola

⁶⁷ Then his father Zechariah was filled with the Holy Spirit and spoke this prophecy:

⁶⁸ "Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, for he has looked favorably on his people and redeemed them.

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⁶⁹ He has raised up a mighty savior for us
in the house of his servant David,
⁷⁰ as he spoke through the mouth of his holy prophets from of old,
⁷¹ that we would be saved from our enemies and from the hand of all
who hate us.
⁷² Thus he has shown the mercy promised to our ancestors,
and has remembered his holy covenant,
⁷³ the oath that he swore to our ancestor Abraham,
to grant us ⁷⁴ that we, being rescued from the hands of our enemies,
might serve him without fear, ⁷⁵ in holiness and righteousness
before him all our days.
⁷⁶ And you, child, will be called the prophet of the Most High;
for you will go before the Lord to prepare his ways,
⁷⁷ to give knowledge of salvation to his people
by the forgiveness of their sins.
⁷⁸ By the tender mercy of our God,
the dawn from on high will break upon us,
⁷⁹ to give light to those who sit in darkness and in the shadow of death,
to guide our feet into the way of peace.”
⁸⁰ The child grew and became strong in spirit, and he was in the
wilderness until the day he appeared publicly to Israel.

Zechariah's Prophecy

“The bright dawn of salvation to rise on us”. How beautiful! And this is for all of us here at St. Christopher’s Church who want it... you, me, and the people we hardly know. He will cause it “to shine from heaven on all those who live in the dark shadow of death.”

God’s gifts to us are glorious! Many in our parish are growing older, and older, into the winter (long shadows) of our lives. The hope of salvation and heaven make it less dark every time our faith inches forward. We have clear and colorful images of our loved ones who have gone before us into heaven’s dawn. Our bonds don’t diminish, and we dream of being with them, God and Jesus.

And we are finding the way by knowing Christ – his message, concerns, and desires for us. Thank you, dear God, for his blessed birth and life, and for Mary and Joseph’s nurturing.

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Guiding “our steps into the path of peace.” When I needed him most, God reached deep into my soul with a profound feeling of peace. I am forever blessed and grateful for this.

His love comes to each one of us as very precious gifts, in various ways, and guides “our steps”. He gave us his beloved and only son at Christmas, born under Bethlehem’s star – the magnificent star that lit up the night everywhere.

We celebrate his holy birth every December, endeavoring to hold his light high above all the clatter that surrounds us.

Merry Christmas!

Lucas 1, 67-80 Joanne Mola (translated)

⁶⁷ Entonces su padre Zacarías, lleno del Espíritu Santo, profetizó:
⁶⁸ «Bendito sea el Señor, Dios de Israel,
porque ha venido a redimir a su pueblo.
⁶⁹ Nos envió un poderoso salvador
en la casa de David su siervo
⁷⁰ (como lo prometió en el pasado por medio de sus *santos profetas),
⁷¹ para librarnos de nuestros enemigos
y del poder de todos los que nos aborrecen;
⁷² para mostrar misericordia a nuestros padres
al acordarse de su santo pacto.
⁷³ Así lo juró a Abraham nuestro padre:
⁷⁴ nos concedió que fuéramos libres del temor,
al rescatarnos del poder de nuestros enemigos,
para que le sirviéramos ⁷⁵ con *santidad y justicia,
viviendo en su presencia todos nuestros días.
⁷⁶ Y tú, hijito mío, serás llamado profeta del Altísimo,
porque irás delante del Señor para prepararle el camino.
⁷⁷ Darás a conocer a su pueblo la salvación
mediante el perdón de sus pecados,
⁷⁸ gracias a la entrañable misericordia de nuestro Dios.
Así nos visitará desde el cielo el sol naciente,
⁷⁹ para dar luz a los que viven en tinieblas,
en la más terrible oscuridad,

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para guiar nuestros pasos por la senda de la paz.»

⁸⁰ El niño crecía y se fortalecía en espíritu; y vivió en el desierto hasta el día en que se presentó públicamente al pueblo de Israel.

Profecía de Zacarías.

“El brillante amanecer de salvación se alzaré sobre nosotros”. ¡Qué bello! Y todo es para todos nosotros aquí en la Iglesia de San Cristóbal para quien lo quiera... tú, yo y la gente que nosotros casi no conocemos. Él lo hará “iluminando a los que viven en tinieblas, sentados en la sombra de la muerte”.

¡Los regalos de Dios para nosotros son magníficos! Muchos en nuestra parroquia están envejeciendo y envejeciendo, hacia el invierno (largas sombras) de nuestras vidas. La esperanza de la salvación y el paraíso, hacen esto menos obscuro cada vez que nuestra fe se mueve hacia adelante unas pulgadas. Nosotros tenemos claras y coloridas imágenes de aquellos a quienes amamos y quienes se han ido antes de nosotros al amanecer del paraíso. Nuestros vínculos con ellos no disminuyen y nosotros soñamos con estar cerca de ellos, de Dios y de Jesús.

Y nosotros estamos encontrando el camino cuando conocemos a Cristo -su mensaje, sus preocupaciones y sus deseos para nosotros-. Gracias, querido Dios, por Su bendito nacimiento y vida, y por el cuidado y protección de María y José.

Guiando “nuestros pasos por un sendero de paz”. Cuando yo lo necesite más, Dios entró a lo más hondo de mi alma con un profundo sentimiento de paz. Yo estoy eternamente bendecida y agradecida por esto.

Su amor viene a cada uno de nosotros como un regalo muy precioso, de muchas maneras, y guía “nuestros pasos”. Él nos dio a su muy amado y único Hijo en Navidad, nacido bajo la estrella de Belén -la esplendorosa estrella que iluminó la noche en todas partes -.

Nosotros celebramos Su Santísimo nacimiento cada diciembre, esforzándonos en mantener Su luz en lo alto, por encima de todo

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el bullicio que nos rodea.

¡Feliz Navidad!

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Wed Dec 24 - Psalm 89:1 ,2, 14-17 – Maria del Toro

¹ Oh SEÑOR, por siempre cantaré
la grandeza de tu amor;
por todas las generaciones
proclamará mi boca tu fidelidad.
² Declararé que tu amor permanece firme para siempre,
que has afirmado en el cielo tu fidelidad.
¹⁴ La justicia y el derecho son el fundamento de tu trono,
y tus heraldos, el amor y la verdad.
¹⁵ *Dichosos los que saben aclamarte, SEÑOR,
y caminan a la luz de tu presencia;
¹⁶ los que todo el día se alegran en tu nombre
y se regocijan en tu justicia.
¹⁷ Porque tú eres su gloria y su poder;
por tu buena voluntad aumentas nuestra fuerza.

Nuestro Dios impresionante

Oh Señor por siempre cantare la grandeza de tu amor por todas las generaciones proclamara mi boca tu fidelidad Has sido, oh mi Señor, un refugio a lo largo de la historia.

Dichoso el pueblo que sabe aclamarte, y que avanza a la luz de tu faz, Señor; tu Nombre es nuestra alegría y nos engrandece tu justicia.

Un Cristiano que conozca semejante poder usándolo en su vida, llevara una vida especial, llena de gozo y paz. aunque tenga que pasar por momentos difíciles, pero luego saldrá adelante con Victoria.

Debemos tener plena confianza en su infinito Amor por nosotros y que compartamos ese amor con nuestros hermanos.

¿Cómo puede un mortal describir el poder y la habilidad de nuestro Creador, Dios infinito? Esto es una imposibilidad, porque Dios es tan poderoso, grande, y vasto, que nuestras mentes pequeñas, haciendo lo mejor, no pueden comprenderlo.

¡Pero Dios se ha revelado a Sí mismo en Su Libro, la Biblia, de una forma suficiente y adecuada para darnos una idea amplia y

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desarrollada de Su poder para realizar lo que para el ser humano es imposible!

*¹ I will sing of your steadfast love, O LORD, forever;
with my mouth I will proclaim your faithfulness to all
generations.*

*² I declare that your steadfast love is established forever;
your faithfulness is as firm as the heavens.*

*¹⁴ Righteousness and justice are the foundation of your
throne;*

steadfast love and faithfulness go before you.

*¹⁵ Happy are the people who know the festal shout,
who walk, O LORD, in the light of your countenance;*

*¹⁶ they exult in your name all day long,
and extol your righteousness.*

*¹⁷ For you are the glory of their strength;
by your favor our horn is exalted.*

Our Awesome God

A Christian who knows such power and uses it in his life will have a special life, full of delight and peace. Although he may have to go through difficult moments, Victory will be his later on.

We ought to have complete confidence in your infinite love for us and share this love with our sisters and brothers.

How can a mortal describe the power and abilities of our Creator, infinite God? This is impossible because God is so powerful, great and vast that our small minds, even doing our best, cannot comprehend it.

But God has revealed Himself in His Book, the Bible, sufficiently and appropriately to give a broad and developed idea of His power that would be impossible for humans to realize.

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Thu Dec 25 - 1 John 4:7-16 – Fr Peter Fabre⁺

⁷ Beloved, let us love one another, because love is from God; everyone who loves is born of God and knows God. ⁸ Whoever does not love does not know God, for God is love. ⁹ God's love was revealed among us in this way: God sent his only Son into the world so that we might live through him. ¹⁰ In this is love, not that we loved God but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the atoning sacrifice for our sins.

¹¹ Beloved, since God loved us so much, we also ought to love one another. ¹² No one has ever seen God; if we love one another, God lives in us, and his love is perfected in us.

¹³ By this we know that we abide in him and he in us, because he has given us of his Spirit. ¹⁴ And we have seen and do testify that the Father has sent his Son as the Savior of the world. ¹⁵ God abides in those who confess that Jesus is the Son of God, and they abide in God. ¹⁶ So we have known and believe the love that God has for us.

God is love, and those who abide in love abide in God, and God abides in them.

Abiding in Love

John's words so eloquently tell us about God's love for us. It is a love that is boundless, unconditional, and totally giving of the very best God has to offer— His only-begotten Son! It is a love so deep that His blood is freely shed to redeem and restore us, a perfect sacrifice that enables love to be perfected in us. How can we possibly merit that? We can't. How can we possibly wrap our minds around something so incredibly powerful? We can't. And yet, love is born in our hearts in the form of a tiny baby who changed the world, and changes who and what we are each and every day – if we will let Him.

As I read and re-read John's words, some things stand out in my mind:

The love God offers us is not passive – it is active, dynamic, ever-changing. So much more than a “warm fuzzy feeling”, it calls for us to respond in kind, with love. It calls for us to do for others in at least some small way what He has done for us – and that means

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sharing His love and helping others to be transformed by that love. How can we possibly undertake such a daunting task?

The answer is in the words of this scripture that jump out at me: “atoning”, “perfected” and “abide”.

Atoning, from atonement: Break it down as “at-one-ment”. My high school English teacher would have a fit over it – but that is what I see in the word “atonement”, a bringing together and making One. God’s love somehow making us one with one another and one with Him through Jesus Christ. When we are one with God, we are infused with the desire to share that love, and the power to do so.

Perfected: John doesn’t say God’s love is perfect in us, or that we are perfect – rather that His love is perfected in us. That speaks to me of a process, something growing within us, transforming us to become ever more the conduits of God’s love, to reach out and touch others with that love.

Abide: Abiding is somehow much more powerful than simply “living” or “existing”. Abiding is much more three-dimensional, fully dwelling in all aspects of life. John tells us that those who abide in love abide in God, and God abides in them. That sums it all up so beautifully! It makes the heart want to sing God’s praises! As we celebrate Christmas, I thank God that His love abides in us, and invites us to abide in Him, that his love may be perfected in us to hasten the coming of his kingdom.

May God Abundantly Bless Us All as we anticipate the coming of the Christ Child at Christmas!

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Thu Dec 25 - 1 John 4:7-16 – Fr Peter Fabre⁺

⁷ Queridos hermanos, amémonos los unos a los otros, porque el amor viene de Dios, y todo el que ama ha nacido de él y lo conoce. ⁸ El que no ama no conoce a Dios, porque Dios es amor. ⁹ Así manifestó Dios su amor entre nosotros: en que envió a su Hijo unigénito al mundo para que vivamos por medio de él. ¹⁰ En esto consiste el amor: no en que nosotros hayamos amado a Dios, sino en que él nos amó y envió a su Hijo para que fuera ofrecido como sacrificio por el perdón de nuestros pecados. ¹¹ Queridos hermanos, ya que Dios nos ha amado así, también nosotros debemos amarnos los unos a los otros. ¹² Nadie ha visto jamás a Dios, pero si nos amamos los unos a los otros, Dios permanece entre nosotros, y entre nosotros su amor se ha manifestado plenamente.

¹³ ¿Cómo sabemos que permanecemos en él, y que él permanece en nosotros? Porque nos ha dado de su Espíritu. ¹⁴ Y nosotros hemos visto y declaramos que el Padre envió a su Hijo para ser el Salvador del mundo. ¹⁵ Si alguien reconoce que Jesús es el Hijo de Dios, Dios permanece en él, y él en Dios. ¹⁶ Y nosotros hemos llegado a saber y creer que Dios nos ama.

Dios es amor. El que permanece en amor, permanece en Dios, y Dios en él.

Permanezcamos en el Amor

Las palabras de Juan nos hablan tan elocuentemente acerca del amor de Dios por nosotros. Es un amor que no tiene límites, es incondicional y totalmente dando de lo mejor que Dios tiene que ofrecer, ¡Su Hijo unigénito! Es un amor tan profundo que su sangre fue derramada libremente para redimirnos y restaurarnos, un sacrificio perfecto que permite que el amor se perfeccione en nosotros. ¿Cómo podemos merecer eso? No podemos. ¿Cómo podemos envolver nuestras mentes alrededor de algo tan increíblemente poderoso? No podemos. Y, sin embargo, el amor nace en nuestros corazones, en forma de un pequeño bebé que cambió el mundo, y que cambia quién y qué somos cotidianamente - si lo permitimos.

Al leer y releer las palabras de Juan, hay cosas que sobresalen en mi mente:

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El amor que Dios nos ofrece no es pasivo - es, dinámico siempre cambiante y activo. Mucho más que un "sentimiento cálido", exige que respondamos en la misma manera, con amor. Exige que hagamos por los demás en al menos alguna pequeña manera lo que Él ha hecho por nosotros - y eso significa compartir su amor y ayudar a otros a ser transformados por ese amor. ¿Cómo es posible llevar a cabo una tarea de tan enormes proporciones?

La respuesta está en las palabras de este pasaje que saltan a mí: "expiación", "perfeccionar" y "permanecer".

Expiación: Es decir, un "sacrificio perfecto" o en inglés "atonement" que se puede quebrar en tres palabras: at-one-ment. Traducidas individualmente, el resultado es "acercar y hacer uno". El amor de Dios de alguna manera nos hace uno con los otros y uno con Él a través de Jesucristo. Cuando somos unidos en Dios, se nos infunde el deseo de compartir ese amor, y el poder para lograrlo.

Perfeccionar: Juan no dice que el amor de Dios es perfecto en nosotros, o que somos perfectos - en vez dice que su amor se ha perfeccionado en nosotros. Eso me habla de un proceso, algo que crece dentro de nosotros, transformándonos a ser cada vez más los vehículos del amor de Dios, para alcanzar y tocar a otros con ese amor.

Permanecer: Permanecer de alguna manera es mucho más poderoso que simplemente "vivir" o "existir". Permanecer es mucho más tridimensional, en que Dios habita plenamente en todos los aspectos de nuestra vida. Juan nos dice que aquellos que permanecen en el amor permanecen en Dios y Dios en ellos. ¡Eso resume todo tan maravillosamente! ¡Hace el corazón cantar alabanzas a Dios! Al celebrar la Navidad, doy gracias a Dios de que su amor permanece en nosotros, y nos invita a permanecer en Él, que su amor podrá ser perfeccionado en nosotros para apresurar la venida de su reino.

¡Que Dios nos bendiga abundantemente mientras anticipamos la venida del Niño Jesús en la Navidad!

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