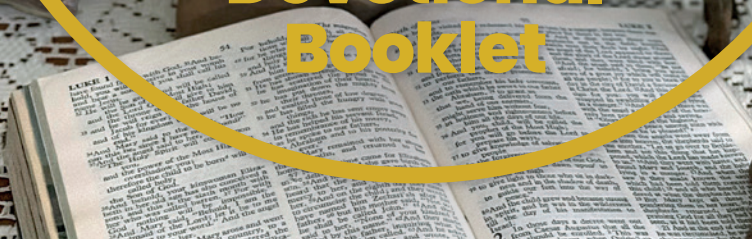


Faithful Promises



**Advent
Devotional
Booklet**



Faithful Promises

Advent begins four Sundays before Christmas and continues to Epiphany on January 6th. The Bible is filled with the promises of God to His people – to us! We talk about God being ‘faithful’, which means that He can be counted on, is reliable and will fulfil all He promises. At Christmas we hear of God’s promises fulfilled in sending His one and only Son into our world to be the Saviour, Messiah, rescuer for our fallen human race. As humans, we are unreliable and unfaithful in so many ways, but on God we can rely because He keeps His covenant (promise) of unconditional and steadfast love and mercy.

Each day of these devotionals, the focus will be on a different passage of the Bible relating to God’s faithfulness in fulfilling His story and plan for the World.

God made promises throughout the Old and New Testaments. Each devotion will concentrate on one aspect that God has promised. May these devotions expand your knowledge of God’s faithfulness and love for you as you contemplate each promise. Each devotion contains a short reflection, Bible reading and prayer. I would encourage you to read the Bible readings along with the devotion as you experience **God’s Faithful Promises**.

**OUR GOD IS FAITHFUL AND
ALWAYS KEEPS HIS PROMISES!**

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God's Covenant

1st Sunday in Advent

Read: Genesis 9:1-3, 7-17

"I have set my rainbow in the clouds, and it will be the sign of the covenant between me and the earth. Whenever the rainbow appears in the clouds, I will see it and remember the everlasting covenant between God and all living creatures of every kind on the earth." Genesis 9:13, 16 (NIV-UK)

I remember as a child making covenants with my friends with secrets we were keeping. It was a solemn promise sealed with a 'pinkie promise'. Many of my friends had other forms of keeping a promise – 'Cross my heart, hope to die', sort of promises. As children, they were binding and if you broke that promise, your friendship was in jeopardy. Watching the 'American Picker' shows on TV, I see when a monetary deal is reached, it is sealed with a handshake. A handshake is viewed as a promise. It is a promise that a deal has been made and should not be revoked.

Way back from the beginning of creation God made promises with His people. He promised to be with Adam and Eve even though they sinned. His promises came in many forms, and we read of them through the stories of His faithfulness and love to His people in the Old Testament. The story of Noah brings with it not just a promise but an eternal sign, even for us today. God referred to it as an 'everlasting covenant'. This was God's promise that He will never again destroy the whole world through a flood; His handshake with humankind. God promises to be with us today and will never leave us.

This physical promise is seen every time we have storms or rains – a rainbow is seen in the sky. The rainbow is an amazing phenomenon. It is caused by the reflection and the refraction of light through the moist atmosphere – God truly is amazing. As we walk through this season of Advent, let us remember all the promises of love and faithfulness from a God of love. A prophesied Messiah was promised throughout the Old Testament and finally in the New Testament God's promise is fulfilled in sending His Son to earth as a baby. Enjoy this season as we wait for the promised Saviour at Christmas and rejoice in God's faithfulness that He will come back again one day.

A rainbow is God's handshake of His faithfulness and promise!

Prayer: My Heavenly Father, you have promised to be with me. I can rest in this promise and remember all the things you have done through my life. You truly are faithful. Amen.



Stand Firm

1st Monday in Advent

Read: Exodus 14:1-18



“Moses answered the people, ‘Do not be afraid. Stand firm and you will see the deliverance the Lord will bring you today. The Lord will fight for you; you need only to be still.’” Exodus 14:13a, 14 (NIV)

Have you ever stood at the edge of the beach where the waves meet the shore and tried to stay still? As the waves roll in, they wash the sand from beneath your feet. Before you realise it, the ground has shifted, and unless you steady yourself, you could topple into the water. It is hard to stand firm when the ground beneath you is constantly moving. The image of shifting sand helps us understand how unsettled life can feel when fear rises and the future is unclear. The Israelites faced that kind of uncertainty as Moses led them out of Egypt.

Moses and the Israelites were departing from Egypt after the ten plagues devastated Pharaoh. God had fought for His people and rescued them. How soon the Israelites forgot God’s promises when Pharaoh’s army came after them to capture them. What they forgot so quickly was that God was their rock and fortress – he would not let those fall who build their lives on God and His promises. The Egyptians relied on their Pharaoh who claimed to be a god, but he really was as shifting as the sands. Moses reminded the Israelites to ‘Stand Firm’ and to remember that God is the one who fights for them and steadies them – all they need to do is stay still and rely on God’s faithful promises.

Jesus also taught the people of that time about sand and rock (Matthew 7:24-27); things they understood. When one builds, it is much better to build your house on a rock which remains firm and unmoving, rather than on sand which can be washed away and the house then falls. This is the message Jesus shared, telling the people to stand firm on God who is their rock, who would save them when storms or waves hit from all sides. In all our situations and through all problems and storms, remember to be still, to stand firm and allow our God to fight for us. God is our rock!

Build your lives on the firm rock of God, then you can stand firm.

Prayer: Lord God, you are my rock. Help me to remember your strength and your promises especially in the difficult times so I can stand firm and rely on you and let you fight for me. Amen.





Constant Presence

1st Tuesday in Advent

Read: Deuteronomy 31:1-8

“The Lord himself goes before you and will be with you; he will never leave you nor forsake you. Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged.” Deuteronomy 31:8 (NIV-UK)

In the late 1800s, a man named George Matheson faced one of the most crushing heartbreaks imaginable. He was engaged to be married - but when his fiancée learned that he was going blind, she ended the engagement. She couldn't bear the thought of spending her life with a man who would lose his sight. Matheson went on to become a pastor and theologian. But the wound stayed with him for years. Then, on the eve of his sister's wedding - the last close family member who had been helping care for him - that pain resurfaced.

Alone in his room, overwhelmed with sorrow and surrender, George picked up a pen and wrote what would become one of the most enduring hymns in the English language.

“O Love that wilt not let me go, I rest my weary soul in Thee...”

He later said the words came to him in just five minutes, with no editing. They poured out like a prayer from a broken heart that still believed. Think about that. A man who had been abandoned because of his weakness, left in the dark - literally and emotionally - still clung to the love of God as his anchor.

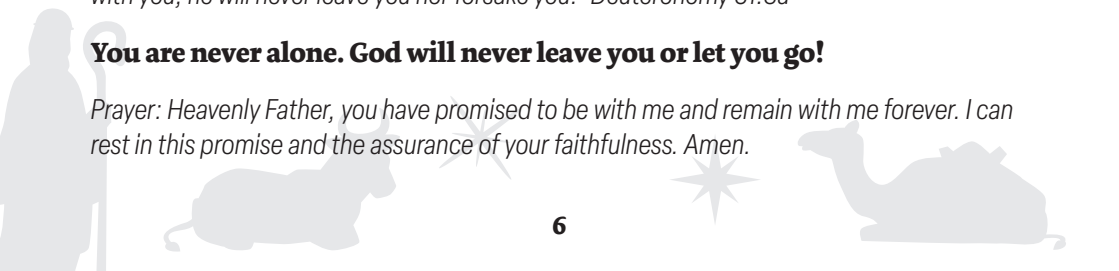
And that's what God's love is. It's not the kind that leaves when you're no longer strong. It's not the kind that pulls away when life doesn't go as planned. It's the love that stays. The love that carries you through loss. The love that whispers, “I will never leave you nor forsake you.”

‘When the love of people fails, the love of God endures. When your world grows dim, His light remains. And when your soul is weary, His love is the place where you can rest.’
[author unknown]

Moses could not take the Israelites into the Promised Land. But he knew that God would remain with them and continue to guide them through all the difficult paths they would travel. God has promised this also to you - “The Lord himself goes before you and will be with you; he will never leave you nor forsake you.” Deuteronomy 31:8a

You are never alone. God will never leave you or let you go!

Prayer: Heavenly Father, you have promised to be with me and remain with me forever. I can rest in this promise and the assurance of your faithfulness. Amen.



Anticipated Promises

1st Wednesday in Advent

Read: Joshua 23:1-5, 14



Joshua said: “You know with all your heart and soul that not one of all the good promises the Lord your God gave you has failed. Every promise has been fulfilled; not one has failed.” Joshua 23:14b (NIV-UK)

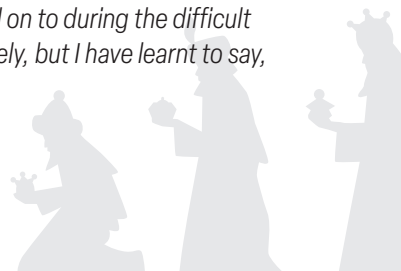
A couple years after moving to Noosa and trying to grow vegetables and fruit trees – with no success due to the poor landfill soil and the birds and bats, I planted a passionfruit vine in a big half barrel next to our shed. The aim was for it to grow over the shed and make it look less like a shed. Growing up in Adelaide, my family had a huge passionfruit vine that grew over our neighbour's bordering garage which provided an abundance of passionfruit. I wanted this. The vine I chose needed a trellis and tending and caring for and I was promised fruit. But only this year – over 6 years later, have I fruit on the vine.

The interesting thing I never noticed before was the ‘passionflower’. It is called a ‘passion’ flower because of its colour purple and has stamens representing the nails and wounds of Jesus. Without the passionflower itself on the vine – there could be no fruit. The flower promises fruit is coming. Throughout the Old Testament, promises were made that God was to send a Saviour to earth to save His people. Prophecies were made from the very beginning of creation that God would send a Messiah, Immanuel, the Saviour of the world. The people of that time, learnt the scriptures, believed God's Word and waited for this promised Messiah.

Jesus coming at Christmas is a beautiful story of angels, gifts, love and ‘Away in a Manger’ feelings, but it comes with the cross in the background. Jesus coming at Christmas does not save us, it was through His actions at Easter on the cross in dying and rising again that all the promises came true. The people had to wait for God's promise to be fulfilled, just like I had to wait for my passionfruit. We grow, we learn, we tend to our faith and help others with their faith, and we wait for our Lord Jesus to come back one day. God has promised this and every one of His promises are true – believe in these promises and His love.

God does not make promises lightly – they are faithful and will be fulfilled!

Prayer: Lord God, thank you for your promises which I can hold on to during the difficult times in my life. Sometimes I want things to happen immediately, but I have learnt to say, ‘Come Lord Jesus’. Amen.





Never Alone

1st Thursday in Advent

Read: Psalm 27:1-5

“The Lord is my light and my salvation – whom shall I fear? The Lord is the stronghold of my life – of whom shall I be afraid?” Psalm 27:1 (NIV-UK)

“Will you never look away from me, or let me alone even for an instant?” Job 7:19 (NIV-UK)

I was now alone. For a couple years I had a constant boyfriend who became my fiancé, and then in one instant it was all gone. What was I to do? How could I continue in this shame and hurt? Any thoughts of a future were now dashed (or so I thought). I was teaching at Mount Barker, SA and I had a school family who would not leave me alone. They would not let me wallow in my pain and sorrow, and I found myself constantly in someone's presence. They provided the strength I needed when I felt so abandoned and alone.

Job experienced far worse than me – losing his family, his home, his livelihood and his health and he felt abandoned. But God would not leave him alone. Even when he saw God's presence as a curse, God never left him and promised that He would be with him always. Job was tempted on all sides to curse God for all his troubles, but he never did and, in his faithfulness, he was blessed with a new life – new family, home and livelihood even greater than before. In Psalm 27, David also came across problems and hardships with Saul always out to kill him. But God protected him for his faithfulness and love for Him. David realised that all his strength, power and possessions came from God who would never leave him. He never needed to be afraid for God was always beside him.

Christmas can be a lonely time for some. God sent His Son to earth so that you would never be alone anymore. This little baby brings life, love and peace to our world. During those times when we may feel alone and abandoned, we can remember and rely on a God who will never leave. Just in the times when you may feel totally alone, as I did, God shows His presence through others and their love and care. We need never fear when trials and pain come, for God is there and will never leave you alone. Rely on His strength, when your strength fails.

God will not leave you alone for even an instant!

Prayer: Creator God, from the beginning of time, you promised to always be with me, and I can rely on this promise into my future. Open my heart to your constant presence and faithfulness. Amen.



Desires of Your Heart

1st Friday in Advent

Read: Psalm 37:3-7a



“Take delight in the Lord, and he will give you the desires of your heart. Commit your way to the Lord; trust in him and he will do this: he will make your righteous reward shine like the dawn...” Psalm 37:4-6a (NIV-UK)

God has promised that He will give me the ‘desires of my heart’. Have you ever wondered what the ‘desires of your heart’ are? I read in Google that these refer to: “your deepest longings, passions, and truest wishes, often guiding your life’s purpose and personal fulfilment.” I have found as I have gotten older, that these heart desires have changed. As a child it was to be accepted and have friends. As a teenager I just wanted to get through school relatively unscathed with an option for pursuing some sort of career. As a young adult I wanted to find a life partner and enjoyment in my occupation. Then it was to have children, grow my family with God’s help and now my heart’s desire focusses on family, retirement and continuing to work with God.

Are some of my heart desires ringing true for the stage you are in your life? Looking back over my life I can see God at work guiding and directing my decisions and then blessing the decisions in so many ways. God is faithful and has promised that He will never leave me. This is another one of God’s promises – “...he will give you the desires of your heart.” These heart desires are deeper than just wants and longings and possessions and wealth. These are the desires that ultimately bring glory to God through your job satisfaction, raising your family, bringing your grandchildren to know Jesus as their Saviour, being a light of God for others, to sharing with your friends and family the hope you have in a loving Heavenly Father.

We can be assured that what God promises is sure and true. Rely on God, put your trust in His Word, learn more about His love through church and studies, grow and delight in knowing God better. Discover how you can experience the desires of your heart. What better way to delight in our Lord, than this Christmas to share the story of God’s love in sending His Son to earth as a baby to be our Saviour.

Jesus is the desire of our hearts, to know and love Him more!

Prayer: Lord Jesus, you came as a baby to bring hope and joy to my life. You are my delight and in you I place my trust. Grow the desires of my heart that bring you glory. Amen.





Deliverance from Trouble

1st Saturday in Advent

Read: Psalm 50:1-2; 14-15

“...call on me in the day of trouble; I will deliver you, and you will honour me.”

Psalm 50:15 (NIV-UK)

Reading through the text above, I cannot help but think of Martin Luther (who lived in the 1500's). He was walking home one night when a terrible storm hit. Martin was so scared that he made a promise to God that if God saved him from this storm that he would serve God for the rest of his life. Well, we know the rest of the story, God did save him from the storm, and he did become a monk. He entered the monastery, leaving his law studies behind him and he devoted himself to God and His Word. Through the devotion of Martin Luther in studying God's Word and wanting to do what God said, we have a clearer and stronger understanding of the scriptures. That God wants all to be saved and this is a free gift from a God of love.

If we go back to the text from Psalm 50, we can see that Martin Luther did call on God in his time of trouble, God delivered him from the storm and Martin honoured God with his devotion to God's Word and by wanting all to be saved. This was a promise fulfilled over five hundred years ago. What about God's promise to you and me in the here and now? Having the gift of hindsight is wonderful. Look back over times of trouble in your life where you have called out to God. What happened? Did He get you through the difficulties and troubles? Did you thank God for His faithfulness and promises?

God will help us in our troubles, but it is also important to thank God and to honour Him in praise and thanksgiving. Our Australian society is not good at thanking people, let alone thanking God, for we feel that it is our right to be saved and delivered from our troubles. But it is through God's love and grace that He wants to do this for His people. We are indebted to God for His goodness to us. God will help you, just remember to thank Him for it. He likes thanks and praise. Thank Him also for sending His son!

Thank and praise God today for all He has done for you.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, thank you that you constantly help me when I am in trouble. I praise you for all your goodness to me. Help me to not take you for granted. Amen.



Extensive Promises

2nd Sunday in Advent

Read: Psalm 103:1-12



“For as high as the heavens are above the earth, so great is his love for those who fear him; as far as the east is from the west, so far has he removed our transgressions from us.” Psalm 103:11-12 (NIV-UK)

When my children were little, I discovered the book, “Guess How Much I Love You” by Sam McBratney. It is a beautiful story about Little Nutbrown Hare and Big Nutbrown Hare trying to outdo each other with their love for each other. The little Nutbrown Hare starts with telling the Big Nutbrown Hare that he loves him so much (stretching his little arms wide). In response the Big Nutbrown Hare stretches his arms wider to show he loves the Little one more. It continues in this vein until the Little Nutbrown Hare says, “I love you right up to the moon.” After thinking that is a very long way, the Big Nutbrown Hare finally responds to the Little Nutbrown Hare who has fallen asleep, “I love you right up to the moon – and back!”

In Psalm 103 above, you can almost hear God being the Big Nutbrown Hare telling us how much He loves us – “as far as the heavens are above the earth” and “as far as the east is from the west”. Such is the extensive and extravagant love of God. He promises us so much more in the previous verses – He will forgive all our sins, heal all our diseases, satisfy us with good things, he will not repay us for our sins, but instead will remove and forget all that we have done wrong. I love these promises of God. Because He has done so much for us and has promised us so many good things we will want to obey, love and worship Him in return.

This promise also extends to the little baby in Bethlehem. This baby, the Son of God, was promised to be our Saviour, our Prince of Peace, Mighty God and Immanuel (God is with us!). As we head towards Christmas remember God’s abundant and incredible promises that are fulfilled with the birth of a little baby who later in life dies and rises to bring to fulfillment the promises given by His Father.

Remember: God loves you to the moon and back and back and back... !

Prayer: Our gracious Father, you love me so much that you sent your Son into the world to be my Saviour. Thank you for this gift of life for me and help me to share this love with family and friends. Amen.





Delight in God's Goodness

2nd Monday in Advent

Read: Psalm 126:1-6

"The Lord has done great things for us, and we are filled with joy." Psalm 126:3 (NIV-UK)

There is something about being in the garden that brings satisfaction and fulfilment. It brings satisfaction to prune, dig out weeds, plant new flowers and add soil and fertiliser to make what has been planted thrive and produce flowers, leaves or fruit. I find a certain peace in the garden. It is like I am helping God's creation grow, thrive and flourish. It is also a time to cut away succours from trees, pull out dead plants and spray for bugs, caterpillars and grasshoppers.

Many of the Psalms have reference to growing, sowing and reaping; Jesus also referred to gardening and farming in His teachings. It was a reference point that the people of the day could relate to. If they planted something, they expected something to grow – I do to! Working in the garden takes a bit of work on our part, but the majority is the work we don't see – the part where the seeds grow underground, the forming of fruit and leaves through the sap and the warmth of the sun and nourishment of the rain. In bringing others to Christ, so often we feel it is up to us to do all the work. Really our job is in planting the seeds and then allowing the Holy Spirit to do His work in the growing.

This Christmas we can celebrate the birth of our Saviour, God's Son who came as a baby to earth to live a human life like us. God sent His Son to earth, so He could fulfil the prophecies and ultimately take the place for all our sins and wrongdoings. What a wonderful story to tell those who do not know Jesus – it is a story of hope in a world filled with fear. Sow the seeds of hope in someone's heart and then step back, listening to God's promptings through the Holy Spirit, and allow the Spirit to work. We may not see it, but God is always working. We don't see seeds growing in the soil – but we see the fruits. God's Word and Spirit is alive and active.

Plant seeds telling of God's love and Jesus' birth this Christmas.

Prayer: Heavenly Saviour, you fill me with your goodness, and I take delight in watching you at work in people's lives. Help me to sow seeds of faith and love in others. Amen.



A Personal God

2nd Tuesday in Advent

Read: Isaiah 43:1-7



God has said: “Do not fear, for I have redeemed you; I have summoned you by name; you are mine.” Isaiah 43:1b (NIV-UK)

When someone knows and remembers your name, it feels like the relationship has taken another step; you are important enough to be remembered. A name is an important part of our identity. There are some people who seem to be able to remember names so well and can put faces to names so easily. I am not one of those people. I have to work hard to remember names. I try to look at the person and say their name out loud at least three times. I know how much it means to people to have their name remembered. I like mine to be remembered too. There was a sitcom show on TV called ‘Cheers’ that ran from 1982–1993, but it had a line in the preview: ‘A place where everyone knows your name.’

We all like to belong to a place where we are known and our name is known. I love walking into Pickleball on a Thursday evening and hear people call out my name and say, ‘Hi Anne’. In Isaiah we read that God knows us so much that He knows our name. He calls us by our name to tell us how much He loves us and cares for us. In Psalm 139 we read that God knows us intimately – He knows us before we were born and helped in forming us in our mother’s womb. *“For you created my inmost being; you knit me together in my mother’s womb” Psalm 139:13.*

The above Bible verse from Isaiah 43, is a promise that God has given to each of us. We need never fear, because God is our personal God and will always be there for us through troubles and times of joy. He knows us personally and will always care for us. He cares for us so much that He sent His one and only Son into the world at Christmas to be our Saviour and Messiah, our Lord and Prince of Peace. This Christmas, take comfort in knowing that there is a personal God who knows you and will never forget your name.

Heaven is the place where everyone knows your name!

Prayer: Lord God, thank you that you are my personal God and that you know my name. I praise you for all that you do for me in loving me so much that you sent your Son to be my Saviour. Amen.





Promise of Peace

2nd Wednesday in Advent

Read: Isaiah 26:1-4

“You will keep in perfect peace those whose minds are steadfast, because they trust in you. Trust in the Lord for ever, for the Lord himself, is the Rock eternal.” Isaiah 26:3-4 (NIV-UK)

“In 2006, in Kokomo, Indiana USA, a man stood before a judge to be sentenced. He had been found guilty, and the courtroom was heavy with tension. Victims’ families were present. Reporters were watching. The room expected either a breakdown or a rant. Instead, the man turned to the judge and simply said: *“All I want is the peace of God.”*”

Those words hung in the air like incense. They weren’t part of a legal strategy. They weren’t a plea for mercy. Just an honest desire—for peace, even while facing the consequences of his own actions. And it sparked conversation across the courtroom. Some mocked. Some pondered. Some wept. Because in that one phrase, there was a glimpse of what so many long for: a peace that isn’t based on circumstances, but on something deeper. A peace that can exist even in a courtroom. Even in guilt. Even when the verdict is already in. That’s what Jesus offers. Not escape from judgment—but peace in the midst of it. A settled heart in unsettled places. *“My peace I give to you... not as the world gives.”* (John 14:27) [Author Unknown]

Our God is a God of peace who gives His people rest in times of turmoil and judgement. We can rest in His arms of love and strength. Jesus coming at Christmas brings peace in a world of turmoil. The birth of a tiny baby in Bethlehem heralded in as the ‘Prince of Peace’ with angels, shepherds and quiet animals, can steady my anxiety in the workings of each day. God is steady, firm and unshakeable, like a Rock. This Rock brings a perfect peace to those who set their minds on Him. Reflect and meditate on God’s Word this Christmas to bring you peace.

“And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.” [Philippians 4:7 NIV-UK]

Prayer: My Saviour of Peace, guide my heart to look to you to find peace in a confusing world. Thank you for the peace of your Son, Jesus, at Christmas to help me to focus on Him. Bless those who are hurting or in pain and bring them your peace. Amen.



Strength in the Unknown

2nd Thursday in Advent

Read: Isaiah 41:8-10, 13-14



***“So do not fear, for I am with you; do not be dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you and help you; I will uphold you with my righteous right hand.”
Isaiah 41:10 (NIV-UK)***

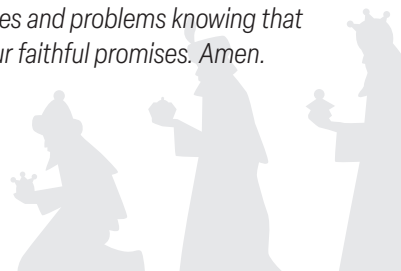
‘Before 1492 when Columbus sailed the ocean blue, the common belief was that if a ship from Europe sailed too far West, they would either fall off the edge of the world or face terrible danger. There was fear of the unknown. In England, there is an ancient nautical map dating back to the time of King Henry IV. On it, the mapmakers wrote these words over the Atlantic Ocean: “Here be dragons; Here be demons; Here be danger.” And based on those superstitious warnings, sailors were afraid of sailing there. But there was an English navigator named John Franklin who was a mighty man of God. He knew the Word of God that says God sits above the circle of the earth. He took that same map and crossed out those fearful words and added these three words: “HERE BE GOD!”’
[Fred Markes]

God has promised to be with us always, even in the unknown and uncertain times when we are not sure what will happen. God has also promised to be our strength in these times, and we can rely on this promise. God tells us not to fear for He is with us. He will never leave us. I love the little story of ‘Footprints’. A man had a dream about him walking on the beach with God, but when trials and issues occurred in his life, he only saw one set of footprints. Thinking God had deserted him during the hard times, the man asked God why there were only one set, and God replied that during these hard times, He had carried him.

God doesn’t desert us during hard and difficult times, instead, in these times He provides the strength we need to face the situations and carries us. He will never leave us. Rely on God to see you through the times that are hard – He will never fail you but will always do what is best. Christmas for some can be a time of hurt and pain – rely on God’s strength and see the baby in the manger born just for you.

Wherever you be – there be God!

Prayer: My God is my strength. On you I can leave all my troubles and problems knowing that you will help me and carry me through them. Thank you for your faithful promises. Amen.





God Hears You

2nd Friday in Advent

Read: Isaiah 65:17-25

“This is the confidence we have in approaching God: that if we ask anything according to his will, he hears us.” 1 John 5:14 (NIV-UK)

Our son was getting married in May. This is usually a drier time of the year in Queensland, and we were banking on dry weather when planning. The weeks before the wedding it rained so much and I was praying; please God let us have just a few days of dry for this wedding. Many of our family was coming up from south and it is hard to show off beautiful Queensland in rain. The week before the wedding it stopped raining, allowing me to get the garden pruned and new bark chips added. The day of the wedding arrived; it was a lovely 25° day with some cloud. But after the wedding ceremony and for the pictures it was perfect. A couple days later the rain began again.

I could put it down to my praying. But does God really operate that way? We are told that God hears the prayers of His children, and I totally agree that He hears and answers prayer. But what if someone was praying for rain the very weekend I was praying for dry – does He have a measure of who He listens to first? Just so you know, I have no idea of the answer to any of these questions. We are told in the Bible: *“In the same way no one knows the thoughts of God except the Spirit of God.” [1 Corinthians 2:11 NIV-UK]*

All that we really need to know or understand is that God has promised to hear His people. *“His ears are open to their prayers.” [1 Peter 3:12b NLT]* When I look back on my personal life with prayer and talking to God, I know that He hears me even when I feel so far away from Him. God tells me to *“Call to Me, and I will answer you, and show you great and mighty things, which you do not know.” [Jeremiah 33:3 NKJV]* This Christmas, spend some time talking to God, asking questions and then listen, for He does hear and will answer. Just wait patiently!

Prayer is a personal time to talk to God, but don’t forget to listen to His answer, He hears you!

Prayer: Heavenly Father, thank you for listening to my prayers and answering them. I cannot understand all that you can do, but I trust in your faithful promises. Amen.



Plans and Provisions

2nd Saturday in Advent

Read: Jeremiah 29:4-14



“For I know the plans I have for you,’ declares the Lord, ‘plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future. Then you will call on me and come and pray to me, and I will listen to you. You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart.’” Jeremiah 29:11-13 (NIV-UK)

It was 1991 and I was planning to go to the UK to work as a nanny for five months before backpacking through Europe for three months and onwards to the USA to join a musical band with Lutheran Youth Encounter. I thought I had all bases covered to have a job lined up in the UK to earn some money before heading onwards. Until my plans came crashing down a week before I was to leave. The company handling my nanny job said the family changed their mind, so I was not needed. (Remember this was before email and this answer I received in the post.) No time to organise anything else, so I kept my flight and thought I would find a job when I got there. Sleeping on a friend's couch I went out each day into London following advertisements and going for interviews. I finally ended up in Monmouth, Wales looking after two small children.

It was a wonderful experience, but very different from what I had started out with. God provided me with a place to stay and earn some money with a lovely family. Monmouth in Wales was not in my plans, but I loved visiting castles on my days off. How often do our plans come crashing down leaving us in all sorts of bother, until we can take stock of the situation and realise that what has now happened is better than any plans we could have thought? When we find ourselves spiralling out of control, remember that God never leaves us. He has promised us hope and a future.

Who knows but God what this will look like, but we can trust in God's provisions and plans and faithfulness. The promises of God in the above Bible verse can only fill us with confidence that it is He who is in control and is doing what is best for us. God will never leave us in the lurch, of that we can be sure. We will seek Him and He has promised that we will find Him. So good!!

God's plans for us are only good – He is faithful!

Prayer: My faithful Father, it is so good to know that you are always with me and know what is best for me. Help me to rely on you when making plans knowing that you provide for my every need. Amen.





Every Day is New

3rd Sunday in Advent

Read: Lamentations 3:19-26

“The steadfast love of the Lord never ceases, his mercies never come to an end; they are new every morning; great is your faithfulness.” Lamentations 3:22-23 (NRSV)

This is an interesting story that I found about an interview by Velma Daniels with a man sharing his experiences with people above the Arctic Circle:

‘Never ask an Inuit (*Eskimo) how old he is. If you do, he will say, “I don’t know and I don’t care.” And he doesn’t. So, Velma pressed him a bit further. When she asked him the second time, he said, “Almost—that’s all.” That still wasn’t good enough for her, so she asked him, “Almost what?” and he said, “Almost one day.”

Velma Daniels asked the man if he could figure out what the Inuit meant. He answered that he did but only after talking to another man who had lived in the Arctic Circle for about twenty years. “He was a newspaperman who had written a book about the Inuits and their customs and beliefs. He said the Inuits believe that when they go to sleep at night, they die—that they are dead to the world. Then, when they wake up in the morning, they have been resurrected and are living a new life. Therefore, no Inuit is more than one day old. So, that is what the Inuit meant when he said he was ‘almost’ a day old. The day wasn’t over yet.”

“Life above the Arctic Circle is harsh and cruel, and mere survival becomes a major accomplishment,” he explained. “But you never see an Inuit who seems worried or anxious. They have learned to face one day at a time.”

God wants that also for us. Each day is a new day with God and with it comes His love and every mercy that is needed for the day. We are to leave the burdens and worries of each day in the faithful arms of our Lord. Christmas is coming with the promise of the Messiah, the Son of God who has come to free us from all our burdens. We have been given a resurrected new life in Jesus at our baptism. We can live each day confident of God’s mercy – leaving the previous day’s issues with Him.

Live as an Inuit – each day is new with God, He is faithful.

Prayer: My Lord and Saviour, thank you for giving me each day to live with you. You are faithful with your love and mercy to me. May I live each day with you by my side. Amen.



God is with Us

3rd Monday in Advent

Read: Matthew 1:18-23



“All this took place to fulfil what the Lord had said through the prophet: ‘The virgin will conceive and give birth to a son, and they will call him Immanuel’ (which means ‘God with us’).” Matthew 1:22-23 (NIV-UK)

My father spent many years researching, corresponding with overseas contacts and visiting places to try to discover the ancestry line of the Gerhardy's (my maiden name). I now have all his research and one day I will try to put it all together somehow – maybe in retirement. There was a 'Gerhardy' in Germany who had researched his family line and was trying with my father to find the connection with the Australian Gerhardy's. In my father's lifetime, he was never able to find the connection which would have connected us to the Gerhardy's in Germany. But when travelling two years ago in the Harz Mountains, Germany, we discovered the town of Gieboldehausen which had many Gerhardy's in the cemetery. Now, I need to explore further. My father developed in me an interest in family history; to understand where we came from and discover the roots of our family.

The beginning of Matthew 1:1-17 contains the genealogy of Jesus, back to Abraham's time. (I didn't have you read it – but I encourage you to peruse it). I have often wondered why this was there, but when we consider God, we realise that in it we see God's plan from the beginning. It helps us to understand why Jesus was given the name 'Immanuel' – 'God is with us.' God was with all people from the beginning of the world, and it had been prophesied through the Old Testament that someone great was coming.

Jesus was prophesied as the Son of God, Prince of Peace, Saviour, Everlasting Father, Messiah and Immanuel. Jesus came to be 'God with us' in human form. He was born a human birth, lived a human life, died a human death, but arose as the Son of God. He is still with us and will continue to be until the end of time. We can see His love and faithfulness for us through the Bible. The Old Testament shows His love and faithfulness, and the New Testament shares His love and promise of our future.

God is with you and me now and always!

Prayer: God of the ages, you are my God. You have been with me from my birth, and you have promised to be with me until the end. Thank you for your faithful presence and promises. Amen.





Faithful Provider

3rd Tuesday in Advent

Read: Matthew 6:25-34

“Look at the birds of the air; they do not sow or reap or store away in barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not much more valuable than they?”

Matthew 6:26 (NIV-UK)

I am not a chess player. I realised I was bad at it when I was put on the chess team in year 9. Each of the school house teams had a few players who played against each other to score points for the team. I was able to lose my first game in just five moves – thus ended my chess career and I was not asked to play any more games. One of my mistakes I realised was that I treated the pawns as expendable. I moved them in the way of the other player pieces and sacrificed them to protect the ones I thought more valuable. A good chess player treats each piece on the chess board as valuable and each move integral to the final play and win.

In the above Bible passage, we read that God values His entire creation, even the little birds (here we could also add every other bit of God's creation.) He looks after and cares for them providing trees and plants which produce the seed and food for these birds. If God is so caring and faithful in providing for these little parts of His creation, how much more will He provide for and care for each one of His children? Where there is pain and suffering and need in the world – God has given the rest of us means to help.

God does not see His children as on a chess board where He makes the plays, and we cope with the situation. God has given all of humankind free-will where we choose the paths we take in life. God is always there to help pick up the pieces and provide us with solutions and love. At Christmas, God sent His Son into the world to be the ultimate sacrifice to help us win eternal life. There now is no longer any sacrifice needed. Welcome the baby Jesus into your heart and home this Christmas and join with the angels in celebrating God's love and concern for each of us.

You are so important to God, that He gave the ultimate sacrifice of His Son Jesus to the world.

Prayer: Lord God, thank you that you provide for me in all my needs and situations. You care for me in so many ways and I need to praise and thank you for all your mercies and faithfulness to me. Amen.



Promise of Rest

3rd Wednesday in Advent

Read: Matthew 11:28-30



“Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest.”

Matthew 11:28 (NIV-UK)

This invitation from Jesus is for everyone, but it seems that until we discover how weary and burdened we are, and in need of rest, that we discover what Jesus offers are for us. For those who are not weary and doing fine, maybe this invitation doesn't hold much value. There is a book by Brennan Manning titled “The Ragamuffin Gospel”. This book he wrote for a specific audience and group of people that Jesus' invitation is also for. In the forward he writes:

The Ragamuffin Gospel is for: *‘The bedraggled, beat-up, and burnt-out. It is for the sorely burdened who are still shifting the heavy suitcase from one hand to the other. It is for the wobbly and weak-kneed who know they don't have it altogether. It is for inconsistent, unsteady disciples whose cheese is falling off their cracker. It is for poor, weak, sinful men and women with hereditary faults and limited talents. It is for earthen vessels who shuffle along on feet of clay. It is for the bent and the bruised who feel that their lives are a grave disappointment to God. It is for smart people who know they are stupid and honest disciples who admit they are scallywags. It is for anyone who has grown weary and discouraged along the Way.’*

Jesus invites us to come as we are and faithfully promises rest whenever and wherever we need it. For me it is a feeling of peace, love and acceptance. It is a time I can just spend and listen to God telling me how much he loves me even though I fail repeatedly. What does rest look like for you? Is it a time of quiet, or a time amongst God's family feeling accepted and loved? Christmas is seen as a time of peace. We experience the peace of a newborn baby; born for the world. For many it may not be restful but try to see God in the manger come down to bring peace to the world. Find rest in His promise and grace.

Know that God has promised rest to you, whether you need it or not!

Prayer: My God who brings rest, please bring rest to my burdened and weary life. You are faithful in all your promises to me. Help me to faithfully listen to you to bring me peace. Amen.





A Perfect Example

3rd Thursday in Advent

Read: Luke 6:27-37

“Do not judge, and you will not be judged. Do not condemn, and you will not be condemned. Forgive, and you will be forgiven.” Luke 6:37 (NIV-UK)

This last Christmas I decided to watch some of the ‘old’ classic movies about Christmas and I came upon “How the Grinch Stole Christmas”, 2018 animated version, based on the book by Dr. Seuss. The story develops around the character of the ‘Grinch’ who has a heart “two sizes too small”. He is annoyed over the years with the celebrations of Christmas by the ‘Whos’ in Whoville and plots as to how to stop their cheerfulness and joy at Christmas. He disguises himself as Santa Claus and steals all the decorations and presents thinking that Christmas has been destroyed. Instead of the Whos being angry and resentful towards the Grinch, they know that Christmas is not in the decorations and presents, but in the joy of the season. It ends with the Grinch being forgiven and asked to join in the feasting.

We can apply the above story to the ultimate sacrifice God made in order that we could be forgiven. Jesus was our perfect example through His teaching and life of not returning evil for evil, rather He unconditionally forgives repeatedly when we sin and when we hurt others. In the above Bible reading, there is some hard truths and facts: don’t judge and God won’t judge you; don’t condemn and you won’t be condemned; Forgive and you will be forgiven. How hard this is for us mere mortals! Jesus is our sinless Saviour, which is why He is the perfect example for us to follow.

Fortunately for us, God knew we would never measure up which is why He sent His Son at Christmas, who would end up dying innocently for us so that we could enter heaven with our loving God. We couldn’t get there any other way, but we can still try to follow Jesus’ example. When faced with trying situations think about: WWJD? (What Would Jesus Do?) – Forgive, not judge and not condemn. Then realise that you are also forgiven, not judged and not condemned.

We have been forgiven already and get to join in the feasting in Heaven!

Prayer: Thank you, Lord God, that you sent your Son at Christmas to be my perfect example. You knew I couldn’t get to heaven on my own merits – thank you for forgiving me now and in the future. Amen.



Promise of Freedom

3rd Friday in Advent

Read: John 8:31-36



“Jesus replied, ‘Very truly I tell you, everyone who sins is a slave to sin. Now a slave has no permanent place in the family, but a son belongs to it for ever. So if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed.’” Luke 8:34-36 (NIV-UK)

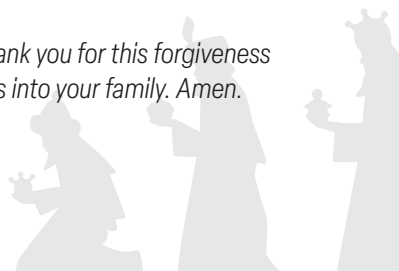
Abraham Lincoln, the 16th U.S. President, was known to frequently express his moral opposition to slavery. At the start of the Civil War (1861–1865), President Lincoln had as his primary objective to preserve the United States. But on January 1, 1863, Abraham Lincoln signed the Emancipation Proclamation, declaring that all individuals in the Confederate States “are, and henceforward shall be free.” This proclamation freed many enslaved people on paper, but practically it came to fruition as the Union army claimed the Southern states (Confederates). This effort culminated in the 13th Amendment, outlawing slavery throughout the United States of America.

Black slaves in America during this time, were treated less than human, even worse than animals. They were property with no rights and could be bought, sold, given away or even killed with no repercussions on the ‘owner’. To be a slave meant that they had no rights to anything. Families were separated and threatened with punishment and even death for the simplest of crimes or actions. After the Civil War, these former slaves were to be given rights and be treated as any human should be treated. They were free! (As we know it took a long time for them to be given the same treatment as the white people, we still need to be reminded of this for our minority groups.)

Similarly to the story above, in God’s eyes, before He sent His Son to earth, we were all sinners and enslaved to this sin with no way out and only punishment for our futures. God fought the war with the devil for each of our lives in sending His Son to earth to free us from our slavery to sin. Jesus came to earth as a baby at Christmas ultimately with the purpose of dying an innocent death so that we could be forgiven and have access to heaven. Jesus set us free through His life, death and resurrection. We have been freed and given a new life to live. We have also been made heirs and have as our inheritance life forever with God in Heaven.

Live in this freedom as God’s child.

Prayer: Jesus, you have set me free from the slavery of sin. Thank you for this forgiveness and new life. Help me to live daily as your child and bring others into your family. Amen.





My Eternal Home

3rd Saturday in Advent

Read: John 14:1-4

“My Father’s house has many rooms; if that were not so, would I have told you that I am going there to prepare a place for you? And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am.” John 14:2-3 (NIV)

When I have visitors, I like to make sure everything is neat, tidy and prepared so that when they come, I can spend time with them and not be bothered with other preparations. We recently had a family of six come to stay for a couple nights. Beds needed to be made, bathrooms cleaned, the yard tidied and meals organised. This family very much appreciated my preparations, but would they have been any less appreciative if I hadn’t spent a couple days getting things ready? It is in my nature to be prepared and then I can relax. Some people can welcome people without as much fuss as me, but the visitors are no less welcomed.

Jesus, in the above passage in John 14 was assuring the people and His disciples that not only is there a place for them in Heaven, but He has their name on the door, and all is prepared especially for them. Everything that we would do for visitors is multiplied immensely for how God has prepared for us. This is a promise that God made at our baptism and His promise is faithful. I love to think about how God may be preparing for me. Does He have His angels dusting and making beds? Is there to be a feast when I get there? I like to think that everything is organised and ready for all who are welcomed into His home. What a joy that will be for all!

Right now, we are preparing our hearts and homes for Jesus to come as a baby at Christmas. I have put out all my nativity sets to remind me and those who come of the focus for Christmas. Again, we all have different ideas of preparing, but none are better than others, except in God’s kingdom He has His angels practising the ‘Gloria’ as we celebrate Jesus’ birth. Jesus came to earth as a baby so that we could be welcomed into our eternal home with God forever. This was God’s plan from the beginning.

Prepare your heart and life for the baby Jesus.

Prayer: Thank you, my loving Father, for sending your Son to earth to begin the preparations for my eternal home. This was an incredible gift, and I can look forward to all that you have prepared for me. Amen.



Faithful Prayer

4th Sunday in Advent

Read: John 14:11-14



“This is the confidence we have in approaching God: that if we ask anything according to his will, he hears us.” 1 John 5:14 (NIV-UK)

Philip Yancey in his book, ‘Prayer’ mentions many prolific pray-ers: He says that in the 17th century English Bishop Lancelot Andrews devoted 5 hours a day to prayer. The 18th and 19th century English minister Charles Simeon rose daily at 4am to pray for 4 hours. There’s an order of Catholic nuns who pray in shifts and where people from their order are praying all day, every day. Martin Luther would also pray for 2–3 hours, or more, a day.

In John 14:13-14: Jesus says: *“And I will do whatever you ask in my name, so that the Father may be glorified in the Son. You may ask me for anything in my name, and I will do it.”*

Does that mean that everything we ask for ‘in Jesus’ name’ will be granted and we will receive? Those extreme pray-ers above mentioned... what did they pray about for so long? Were all their prayers granted? Prayer is the practise of talking to God. The Bible emphasises it again and again as an important value and there are over 650 prayers throughout the Bible. In the passage from John 14, in verse 13 is an important phrase, *“so that the Father may be glorified...”* Our prayers are answered to bring glory to God.

God does answer prayer and the closer we are to God and understand His will, the more discernment we have when praying. We can also experience and see God answering our prayers out of His goodness. A way to see God at work is to journal your prayers. Write down your prayers and after a time, read them again and see how God has answered them – in His time and in His way. The heart of prayer is not getting God to align with our will but rather getting our will to align with God’s. This is all about a relationship with our Heavenly Father. Christmas is coming, as a gift pray for your family to be in close relationship with our God ‘in a manger’.

Jesus came to earth to be close to you!

Prayer: My Father in Heaven, thank you for coming to earth for me to have a closer relationship with you. You know my concerns and needs before I pray for them. Hear my prayer and let me know your will. Amen.





God's Spirit

4th Monday in Advent

Read: John 14:16-18

"I will ask the Father, and he will give you another advocate to help you and be with you for ever. I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you." John 14:16, 18 (NIV-UK)

Mary stood in the middle of a busy train station. She was holding her mother's hand and felt safe even amidst the hustle and bustle. Suddenly, her mother got onto the train, leaving her daughter. As the doors closed and she was now separated from her mother, panic set into Mary and she felt lost, alone and abandoned. This was exactly the way the disciples felt when Jesus told them He was leaving. Over the years the disciples had grown totally dependent on Jesus for guidance, comfort and protection. They didn't understand when He said He was leaving to be with the Father, or that He would suffer and die for the world.

As Mary sat down on the station bench to cry, a gentle hand rested on her shoulder. She looked up and saw that she wasn't alone. Before her mother left, she arranged that her loving grandmother would be there to watch over Mary, to care for her, to love her and guide her until the return of her mother. Mary's grandmother sat down beside her to comfort her and gave her a map where her mother went and a phone number that she could use to call her mother at any time. There were letters of love from her mother to Mary that she could read repeatedly and know that she would never be alone.

In the story, the mother represents Jesus who left and went into Heaven, and the grandmother represents the Holy Spirit who is now present with us to comfort and guide us until we see Jesus again. Just like Mary, we are never left alone to navigate our way through life as 'spiritual orphans'. Through the Holy Spirit, Jesus makes a permanent home with us, giving us the Bible with letters of love, prayer to speak with Him, guidance and truth to help no matter where our journeys may take us. This week, Jesus comes into our lives as a human baby to show us God's love. But He has also given us His Spirit to help guide and comfort us always.

You are never alone – that's a promise!

Prayer: Dear Jesus, you came to bring peace and love at Christmas. I also know that I am never alone with your Spirit beside, before and behind me always. Thank you for your care for me. Amen.



Chosen and Adopted

4th Tuesday in Advent

Read: Ephesians 1:3-6, 11-12



***“Even before the world was made, God had already chosen us to be his through our union with Christ, so that we would be holy and without fault before him.”
Ephesians 1:4 (GNT)***

Our children were two, four and six years old and we were driving to Batemans Bay for a holiday. Then we passed the sign. I saw it and read it, and I know my husband did too, but neither of us said anything until that night at dinner. The sign said: ‘For sale. Black Labrador Puppies’. We talked about it as a family together and said, ‘Let’s just explore this with the children.’ The next day we drove back to the sign and farm and there were five puppies. Some were boisterous. Others sleepy, and then just the right one chose our son. Not only had we chosen to have a puppy, but that puppy chose us!

On our way home to Wodonga, we picked up our newest member to our family and her name was given – Nala. From that day Nala was adopted into our family. For the next 14 years she was with us through moving, playing with the children, hugging when they were sad and loving us through it all. God has chosen us from the beginning of time. As it says in the verse above “...before the world was made...” God chose you to be in His family. Through all the issues and problems that come up in our lives, God is faithful and will never leave us: “...the Lord who created you says, ‘Do not be afraid – I will save you. I have called you by name – you are mine.’” Isaiah 43:1 (GNT).

This is a promise God has made to all His children. God is faithful in this promise. You have been brought into His family through baptism where you were named and claimed. The epitome of His love comes in three days with the birth of his Son at Christmas. God sent His Son to earth at Christmas to be our Messiah and live the life of a human, but He then died as God to be our Saviour so that we could claim our inheritance – eternal life forever!

You have been chosen and adopted by God to be with Him forever!

Prayer: Thank you, Lord Jesus, for coming to me this Christmas and being my Lord and Saviour. You have named and claimed me forever. Help me to live a life in your presence. Amen.





God's Unconditional Love

4th Wednesday in Advent

Read: Romans 8:31-39

“For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.” Romans 8:38-39 (NIV-UK)

An Irish priest was travelling through the quiet countryside when he noticed an elderly peasant kneeling by the side of the road in deep prayer. Impressed by the man's intense devotion to prayer and God, the priest approached the man and gently said, 'You must be very close to God.' The old man lifted his eyes and thought for a moment, and then he gave a warm, gentle smile. He then replied, 'Yes, God is very fond of me.'

As a Tract Mission Development Officer and writer of the LTM tracts, I like to write tracts which tell people of God's love; how much He loves them and sharing the story of Jesus. God loves you! When was the last time you heard that? What about the last time you believed it? In the Romans verse above, Paul goes to an extreme to share with the reader about the love of God. Read through that again... basically there is nothing on earth or beyond that can separate us from the love of God. Paul starts with the absolutes – life and death; then he goes to the spiritual: angels and demons; then Paul travels through time constraints: present and future; he then covers everything else: powers, height, depth and everything else in all creation. So basically, there is nothing at all that can separate us from God's love.

In the little story above, what took my attention was how the old man took the emphasis away from how he felt about God and instead placed it where it belongs – how God feels about each of us. God loves us so much that He sent His only Son to earth – to become a human, like us. His love extended to providing a place for our eternal life through the death of His Son. Celebrate God's love for you and your family this Christmas. Talk about it, share His love and read the Bible story... what an incredible love.

God really is very fond of you!

Prayer: My loving Father, thank you for assuring me over again how you feel about me. In fact, you gave your only Son to die for me. That truly is amazing love. I love you too, Lord. Amen.



The Greatest Love

Christmas Eve

Read: 1 Corinthians 13:4-7; 13



***“And now these three remain: faith, hope and love. But the greatest of these is love.”
1 Corinthians 13:13 (NIV-UK)***

‘Mark was an 11-year-old orphan living with his aunt, who often reminded him that without her he would be homeless. Though life at home was cold and difficult, Mark remained gentle and kind. Each day he stayed after class to help the teacher tidy the room, and as they worked quietly, Mark often spoke lovingly of his mother, who had died when he was young.

As Christmas neared, Mark stopped staying after school and the teacher wondered what had happened. When he came to class, the teacher said that she missed him, his eyes lit up and he whispered to her that he was making a Christmas surprise for her. On the last day before Christmas, Mark came shyly up to the teacher holding a tiny wooden box. ‘It’s your present,’ he said. The teacher opened it and found it empty. Mark explained, ‘You can’t see it, touch it, taste it, or feel it, but Mother said it makes you warm, safe and happy. It’s love – and it’s best when you give it away.’” [author unknown]

It is Christmas Eve and many people spend it with family – a special dinner, going to worship, re-reading the nativity story of Jesus’ birth or family time. Jesus coming at Christmas is all about love – the GREATEST love. It is the love of a Heavenly Father who saw His children needing a Saviour... and He sent His only Son to earth to become one of us and live among us forever. So, as the presents are given out, remember love and remember that it is best when you give it away. *“For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.” [John 3:16]* (Note in the verse that ‘God gave to us out of love’). God sent Jesus to be a baby at Christmas because of His love for you. I pray that during this Christmas time you may experience and see the love of a loving Heavenly Father.

Christmas brings joy, celebration and gifts – but most of all, Christmas is for love.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, thank you for your love and the love we receive at Christmas. You sent your Son to earth out of your love for me. Help me to share this with my family and friends. Amen.





The Promise Fulfilled

Christmas Day

Read: 2 Corinthians 1:18-22

“But as surely as God is faithful, our message to you is not ‘Yes’ and ‘No’. For the Son of God, Jesus Christ, who was preached among you by us... was not ‘Yes’ and ‘No’, but in him it has always been ‘Yes’. For no matter how many promises God has made, they are ‘Yes’ in Christ.” 2 Corinthians 1:18-20a (NIV-UK)

This morning, Christmas Day, we picture Mary holding her new-born baby in a stable surrounded by animals, shepherds and maybe a curious towns person from Bethlehem. I wonder if the innkeeper even popped in to ask if he could help after noticing all the visitors during the night and the star shining so brightly over his dusty stable. But, gazing at this little baby boy, Mary knew in her heart that it all meant only one thing: God’s ultimate ‘Yes’ had arrived. For centuries prophets had spoken of a light shining in the darkness. Through all the changing empires, I am sure that all of humanity wondered if God would truly keep His Word and send a Messiah to save His people.

The shepherds and even the Magi could not comprehend the greatness of the baby held in His mother’s arms. But they came to marvel at Him. We also cannot even hope to understand or comprehend this greatness and glory revealed in the baby Jesus. That stable, so long ago, contained an eternity of promises because it contained the precious Son of God. This Christmas story is the story of God’s promises. In this manger, all of God’s promises found their ‘Yes’ in this little baby.

The Apostle Paul wrote in 2 Corinthians 1:18-22, that God’s character doesn’t waver between “Yes and No”. He proved His faithfulness to us not with just words, but by wrapping Himself in human flesh to dwell among us. This Christ-child in the manger, is the eternal ‘Yes’, the promise and the affirmation that God’s love is real, firm, steadfast and forever. God loves to say yes to His promises. Yes, you are adopted into the family of God! Yes, you are forgiven! Yes, you have peace with God! Yes, you have the promise of eternal life! Yes, you have a relationship with God! Yes, Jesus is a King that will reign with righteousness and justice forever! Yes, His light will penetrate the gloom of the world! And yes, He is your hope!

ALL God’s promises were revealed as a ‘Yes’ in Jesus.

Prayer: Lord God, you have promised everything to me through the birth of your Son, Jesus. All my hopes and dreams rest in these unfulfilling promises to which you say – YES! Amen.



Getting Unstuck

26th December

Read: Ephesians 1:3-10



“In [Jesus] we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of God’s grace that he lavished on us.”
Ephesians 1:7-8a (NIV-UK)

We had been sitting in our boat for an hour already. Stopping for a toilet break at the entrance to the everglades in Noosa proved to be our downfall. We were stuck and there was no way to get the engine going again. So, we called the coast guard to come and rescue our family. Being a few hours from Noosa, it took a while for the coast guard to get to us, but then the problem: the entrance to the everglades is extremely shallow (30cm), which no coast guard boat could get through. So, we had to try to paddle our boat firstly through the depths around the Kinaba Information Centre (breeding ground for bull sharks) and through the shallows into Lake Cootharaba, where we could be rescued.

What an experience and it put our children off boating for a long time after and we thanked the coast guard repeatedly for rescuing us. Thinking about our situation, we were stuck. The engine was not just an easy fix – a part had broken and the whole engine needed to be overhauled – nothing was going to get us moving that fateful day. There are times that I feel that I am just ‘stuck’ and nothing I do can get me out of a situation. Let’s relate this to our world. God created the world and it was perfect. Then came humankind and all the sin that followed. Long ago God promised a Saviour who would come and get all of humanity out of the situation of sin that everyone was stuck in.

Then comes Jesus. We celebrated His coming to earth as a baby yesterday. It is not just a cute story with sheep, angels, donkeys and shepherds. It is God’s solution to the world being stuck in sin. It is the beginning of God’s plan of salvation for us. Through the blood of Jesus (which we celebrate at Easter), we have been saved and redeemed because of God’s love and grace for us.

This little baby rescues us from being stuck in our sin!

Prayer: Loving Father, thank you that you came into the world to save me from being stuck in all my sin. You have promised me life eternal with you, and you are faithful to all your promises. Amen.





God's Provision

27th December

Read: Philippians 4:4-9; 19

“And my God will meet all your needs according to the riches of his glory in Christ Jesus.” Philippians 4:19 (NIV-UK)

There are so many stories in the Bible which tell of God providing at just the right time. I love the story of Esther where it looks like all is lost and the Jews will all be killed, when the King's heart opened to hearing Esther and the people were saved; “...for such a time as this” [Esther 4:14b]. Then there is God providing for the Israelites wandering in the desert given manna in the morning and quails in the evening to sustain them [Exodus 16]. The story of Elijah is also remarkable. In 1 Kings 17, Elijah was told by God to go to the brook to drink water, and God would send ravens to bring him bread in the morning and meat in the evening and when that ran out, God told him to go and visit a widow in Zarephath. This woman had only enough food for her son and her for one last meal, but Elijah asked for it and the widow gave it to him. God then made sure that the widow's jar of flour was never empty and her jug of oil was always full until God sent rain on the lands again.

There are stories about God's provision for His loved people throughout the Bible and I am sure that you also have many stories of how God provided for you... at just the right time! Revisit and talk about some of these instances of God's love and provision. It is important that we realise that God is working every day in our lives. God has promised in Philippians: *“God will meet all your needs according to the riches of his glory in Christ Jesus.”*

So why do we doubt God's love and His promises? We have just celebrated Christmas where we revisited the incredible promise of God sending His only Son to earth to save us from an uncertain future. Through Jesus, our future is now secure. So do not doubt God watching over and caring for your every need – He is always looking after you.

Trust and believe in God's unfailing love, and His promises and provision for you!

Prayer: Lord God, you provide for my every need and then more. Thank you. Help me to share the faithfulness shown to me to others that they may also give praise and thanks to you. Amen.



God's Rescue Plan

28th December

Read: Colossians 1:9-14



“For he has rescued us from the dominion of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of the Son he loves, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.”

Colossians 1:13-14 (NIV-UK)

‘Several years ago, a group of Christian missionaries met in Delhi, India, with representatives of other religions to discuss their beliefs. In the course of their talks, a member of a major non-Christian religion said to a Christian missionary, “Tell me one thing your religion can offer the Indians that mine can’t.” The missionary thought for a moment and replied, “Forgiveness! Forgiveness!” Unlike the followers of all other world religions, those who put their hope in Christ have full assurance that their sins are forgiven. British Bible teacher and lecturer David Pawson says, “I have talked to the most devout Muslims who pray five times a day, have journeyed to Mecca, have fasted during Ramadan, and are more devout than many Christians. But when I ask, ‘Do you know if your sins are forgiven?’ They’ve said, ‘We don’t. We just have to hope for the best.’” In Colossians 1, Paul gave us the basis on which forgiveness rests—the redemption Christ secured through His death on the cross. But Christ is not merely the founder of a major religion. He is the “image of the invisible God” by whom all things were created. The forgiveness He offers, therefore, is an offer from God Himself.’ – D J De Haan

It can be really confusing with all the different religions and theories present in our world today. Shouldn't we be tolerant and believe that all lead ultimately to heaven? If it were that easy what is the point of faith? To believe that all will ultimately make it to heaven is believing in universalism. Yes, Jesus came to earth to save all people and wants all people to be saved, but it is only through believing in Jesus as the Son of God – that he died for the forgiveness of our sins and rose again to show us the way to eternal life – that we can gain access to heaven. We know the truth and the only way to heaven – let's share it with others and then let the Holy Spirit work.

It is only through believing in Jesus that we are rescued for eternal life in heaven with Him.

Prayer: Dear Jesus, it is only through you that I have eternal life. You have forgiven all my wrongs in the past and in the future. Help me to bring others to this saving gift of grace. Amen.





Our Certainty

29th December

Read: Hebrews 6:13-20

“We have this hope as an anchor for the soul, firm and secure.” Hebrews 6:19a (NIV-UK)

When at the Luther Seminary in Adelaide, my husband Mark had a little 1952 Morris Minor as his vicarage car. It was a beautiful forest green and was so much fun to drive around in – to the beach, into the hills (bit hard going up hills) and we even entered it in the Birdwood Rally run, from Glenelg to Birdwood National Motor Museum. For the two of us it was great, but when children came, we had problems – there were no seatbelts in the back. So, we had to have anchor points and secure seatbelts put in so that our children would be safe in their child restraints.

These anchor points were attached to the frame of the car, not just to the moveable seats. To make them secure they had to be fixed to the most immovable part of the car. These could not be put in by just anyone, it had to be a qualified mechanic who knew all about the car and it would be safe then for our children. God has given us His promises and faithfulness through the Bible as our anchor point to keep us ‘firm and secure’, like it says in the Bible verse above. God knows all about each of us and how to keep us safe and secure in His love. He shares all His faithful promises through the stories in the Bible. He sent His Son at Christmas to be the ultimate anchor for our salvation.

Jesus is our anchor point. We can follow His words and teachings to guide us through our lives. We can read them and share them with our family and friends for we know they are sure, true and immovable. Putting my children into their seats in the little Morris, I knew that they were as secure as I could make them. But we have God’s anchor point, Jesus! To put our hope and faith in Him is the only way to feel firm and secure, knowing that God will never move or change. His faithful promises are sure.

Only believing in Jesus can we be certain of our future!

Prayer: Lord Jesus, you have given me your Word through the Bible that I can hold on to when I feel uncertain. You will always be there for me – of that I can be certain. Amen.



Our Eternal Helper

30th December

Read: Hebrews 13:1-8



“So we say with confidence, ‘The Lord is my helper; I will not be afraid. What can mere mortals do to me?’” Hebrews 13:6 (NIV-UK)

When I was a primary school teacher, there used to always be a helper (or monitor) list in my classroom. During the year each child would get a turn at being part of all the different helpers: line leaders, handing out papers/books, collecting the notices, getting the lunch orders, etc. Each of these positions were treated as a status symbol and that through helping each child was a valued member of the class. Each child was valued and it is important that children be allowed to help and get the rewarding feeling of helping others. As adults there are also roles within our society, community and church where we can serve/help others and get that feeling of being a valued member and receive a feeling of self-worth.

Our Lord has promised that He will always help us and be there to serve us. Not that God has a need to feel wanted... or does He? God loves to serve and help His children, but He also loves to hear our thank yous and praise for all He does for us. If we don't thank Him, God will not remove His helping but remember when you were a child and you did something; when you were thanked, how good it felt. I imagine God also feels appreciative of our thanks.

As God's children, in the Hebrews text, Paul is asking us to imitate how God helps others and so be an example to others to show the gift of service and helpfulness. In this way people will see our faith and love of God and want this rewarding feeling of being unconditionally loved and helped in all of the situations we may find ourselves in. God is and always will be our helper and Paul then tells us never to be afraid for what can others do to us if God is on our side? As Paul wrote in Romans 8:39, *“...nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.”*

God has promised to help all His children at all times!

Prayer: With you by my side dear Lord, I can be assured of receiving what I need. You provide for my everyday needs and my eternal needs. Thank you for all your gifts to me. Amen.





Faithfulness

New Year's Eve (31st December)

Read: 2 Timothy 2:8-13

“... if we are faithless, [God] remains faithful...” 2 Timothy 2:13a (NIV-UK)

In the glow of December's last sunset, Clara closed her journal. As she looked back over the pages of unexpected detours and grace, she smiled. Her own plans had failed, but a faithful God had written something far better. Clara flipped to the very first page of her diary. It was filled with bold, rigid goals. She had mapped out her career, her savings, and her calendar with the precision of a seasoned architect. But by March, the blueprint had crumbled. A sudden layoff and a string of health scares had left her standing in the rubble of her own expectations.

“Lord, I don't know what you're doing,” she had wept in the quiet of her bedroom one rainy Tuesday night. The middle chapters of her year were a blur of tears, waiting, and, slowly, unexpected provision. Doors she had been desperate to keep open slammed shut, forcing her down a different path. Friends and family had stepped in with meals and encouragement. She had found a new, lower-stress job that gave her time to volunteer—something she had always put off. In the pauses that once terrified her, she had learned to sit still and listen. Now, sitting in the fading light, she felt an overwhelming sense of peace. Her bank account wasn't where she wanted it to be in January, and her life looked drastically different, yet something far deeper had shifted. She realized she had not been walking alone in the dark; she had been held. God had been faithful not by giving her the exact life she ordered, but by giving her the strength to survive the one she received.

Clara took a fresh pen and opened to a blank section at the back of the journal. Instead of plotting out next year's exact destinations, she wrote a simple prayer of gratitude. She traced the thread of divine grace through her struggles and triumphs, realizing that the author of her life knew exactly how the story ended. She closed the book, ready to step into the unknown with the One who had proven faithful through every season. Now, to the next year...' [author unknown]

God has promised to always be faithful.

Prayer: Lord, thank you for showing me through the last year your faithful guiding and blessings. You have helped me and given me comfort and strength. Go with me as I begin a new year with you. Amen.



Persevere and Win

New Year's Day (1st January)

Read: Hebrews 12:1-3



*“...let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles.
And let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us, fixing our eyes on Jesus...”
Hebrews 12:1b-2a (NIV-UK)*

My little son was in his first year of school – and his first cross country race. He was very determined to participate, even though it was voluntary participation to take part in the kilometre run. It was around the grassed area (oval) at Victory primary school, Wodonga and then around the school buildings. He had been practising and the day finally arrived. My heart was beating so hard and I was worried that he wouldn't be able to finish and would be distressed, but he assured me; “I'm going to finish, Mum!” He ran so fast and as far as his little legs could take him. He didn't finish first, but he finished and my heart swelled with pride for his tenacity and perseverance.

We are beginning a new year today. What will this year hold for you? Do you already have plans and ideas that you want to fulfil or are you rather going to see where God takes you? Whichever option you take, God is with you as you run the race He has set before you this year. It is not a race against others, but rather with yourself as you live your life with Jesus. Jesus has set us a path to follow and that leads us to living in the grace and presence of God. It can look like serving others or leading your children/grandchildren into knowing their Heavenly Father better. Can you, like my little son say to God, “I'm going to finish!”

We are also told to fix our eyes on Jesus. That can also look like spending more time with Him in His Word – through a Bible Study, attending church more regularly, volunteering to help, praying before meals or at bedtime. There are so many ways to fix your eyes on Jesus. When you invite Him more deeply into your heart and home, your year will take on a hugely different path. All you do will be for God and His work on earth. What do you see for your new year?

Persevere in growing your faith life and win joy with Jesus!

Prayer: Lord Jesus, help me to keep my eyes firmly fixed on you as I enter and then journey through this new year. May it be a year of growing and stretching myself in your Word and grace. Amen.





Gift of Wisdom

2nd January

Read: James 3:13-18

***“...the wisdom that comes from heaven is first of all pure; then peace-loving, considerate, submissive, full of mercy and good fruit, impartial and sincere.”
James 3:17 (NIV-UK)***

King Solomon is viewed as a king of wisdom, for that is what he asked from God when God told him he could have whatever he wanted. He was a young king and felt unworthy and unable to fulfill all his kingly duties. He had just taken over the throne from his father, King David, considered ‘the King after God’s own heart’. How could he even try to be as good as his father. So, Solomon asked from God, *“give your servant a discerning heart to govern your people and distinguish between right and wrong.”* [1 Kings 3:9]

We may know some of the wisdom that Solomon displayed. One instance was where he had to decide between two women; one of their babies had died and both women claimed that the living baby was their child. How could he determine when there were no witnesses and other facts. Who was the real mother of the living baby? God gave him wisdom to work through the situation. [Read the famous wisdom story: 1 Kings 3:16-28]

I have heard people say, “I would love to have the wisdom of Solomon to solve this issue!” We can all have this wisdom to discern right from wrong when we listen to God’s leading and prompting. In the verse above from James, we are told that the wisdom from God is *“pure; then peace-loving, considerate, submissive, full of mercy and good fruit, impartial and sincere.”* God’s wisdom thinks of others before ourselves, but then also puts God above everything. To have the wisdom of Solomon is to ‘love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul and mind’ [Matthew 22:37] As you enter this new year, ask God for wisdom and seek His answers. God’s wisdom is a gift and available to us all – He has promised to always be faithful to us and help us in our dealings with others. Seek His face and will and ask: ‘How would God like me to act in this situation?’ You will be answered.

Ask God for wisdom and then move ahead in His grace.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, you have given me the recipe for wisdom. Help me to ask for your help when dealing with others each day. Give me a discerning heart to always do your will. Amen.



A New Creation

3rd January

Read: 2 Corinthians 5:16-21



“When anyone lives in Christ, the new creation has come. The old is gone! The new is here!” 2 Corinthians 5:17 (NIRV)

As a primary school teacher in the 1980's, writing on and utilising a blackboard was covered in my teacher training. We were shown how to have permanent lines, lines for handwriting and then making the blackboard attractive. One thing we were not told is how messy using blackboards are – the dust produced when rubbing off work, the dust to get out of the dusters and that work done on the blackboard sometimes needs to be washed off with a damp cloth to truly get rid of all the previous work. There were also the times when as a teacher I leant against the blackboard, and I then got an imprint what had been written or drawn on my clothes.

One thing I used to really enjoy about blackboards was drawing a new picture each week with the spelling words for the week. And then at the end of each week, I could erase that, wash it and the new week would begin with a new picture. Wouldn't that be great if we could erase the mistakes or sins or words spoken out of frustration or anger at the end of each day and begin again? We can do that! At the end of each day confess to God your thoughts, words and actions that you regret and leave them with Him; knowing that they are forgiven by God. But many times, we hold onto them and eventually they eat away at our hearts and souls causing grudges and pain.

With the beginning of this new year, allow yourself to be a new creation each day – remembering your baptism, when all your sins were washed away. In the shower or as you wash each morning, say the words, “Jesus you have washed away my sins in my baptism – make this day a new day!” Even print these words and put them on the mirror. Jesus has faithfully promised you a new life in Him each day.

Through Jesus, all our blackboard scribbles are erased and our lives washed clean for each new day!

Prayer: Jesus my Saviour, thank you for forgiving me all my wrongdoings and making me a new creation. Help me to begin each day anew with you. Amen.





Forgiveness

4th January

Read: 1 John 1:1-9

“But God is faithful and fair. If we confess our sins, he will forgive our sins. He will forgive every wrong thing we have done. He will make us pure.” 1 John 1:9 (NIRV)

‘As Leonardo DaVinci attempted to complete the painting of his famous Lord’s Supper masterpiece, his mind drew a blank. Apparently, Leonardo was so angry with one of his chief critics that he had secretly used the man’s face as a model from which he painted the face of Judas Iscariot. For weeks, Leonardo wrestled with the fact that he could not clearly get into his mind’s eye the face of Christ to complete his important painting of the Lord’s supper. Finally, one of Leonardo’s trusted spiritual advisors asked him what was wrong, Leonardo explained his predicament and the godly man said, “Jesus said, ‘If you have something against your brother, first make things right before presenting your offerings before the altar.’” [Matthew 5:23] When Leonardo made things right with his critic, instantly his mind’s eye was able to envision the face of Christ that has served as a guide for billions throughout the centuries.’

God has promised that when we come to Him asking for forgiveness He will forgive us and make us clean again. That is grace. It is totally undeserved. This forgiveness was bought for us when Jesus died on the cross. He was sinless and took the place for us, who were sinful. Going through our days – work, family, friends and relaxation times, there are always those who will rub us up the wrong way. Sometimes it is just so much easier to hold a grudge than ask for forgiveness. But, during these times of hurt and unforgiveness it is hard to clearly see the face of Christ. It is obscured through pain and anger.

God is always ready to forgive our sins when we confess. He asks us to do the same for those who hurt us. If God can so easily forgive all that we have done; we should be able to forgive the things others do towards us. As we enter this new year remember to forgive others as God has forgiven us.

God forgives and forgets our sins. Let us try to do this for others!

Prayer: Lord God, thank you for your forgiveness every day. I need your love and grace for I continually sin against you. Help me to forgive others as I have been forgiven. Amen.



Love of God

5th January

Read: 1 John 4:7-19



“And so we know and rely on the love God has for us. God is love. Whoever lives in love lives in God, and God in them.” 1 John 4:16 (NIV)

When each of my three children were born, I experienced a huge flood of emotion. I would do anything to keep these little ones safe for my heart was filled to overflowing with love for each of them. I was in love with them, even though they couldn't yet speak or show me love in return. They probably did everything except love me – cry, not sleep, mess themselves, etc., but all they had to do was look at me or give a little smile and all was forgotten and my heart melted again with unimaginable love.

I believe that God also falls in love with us the moment we are born and baptised into His family. We probably don't do much to deserve His love and instead do things that should repel or repulse God. But He sees beyond the external nature and sees into our hearts. That is where God lives in each one of us. We can do things that would make a parent cringe or get angry, but being God, He waits patiently for us to come back to Him and ask for His love and forgiveness. His love really has never gone. Just like I will always be a mum for my children, and every day I text them with a Godly message and make sure that every day I tell them that I love them. Even if the day is going sideways for them – they know that their mum and their God love them.

God does that too. He tells us every day in every possible way how much He loves us; through His Word, through family, through those little thoughts coming to mind, through nature and its beauty. In God's world we can see His love shining through. The first song my son wrote and played on the piano when he was four years old expresses it all: “God loves me, God loves me – adventure!”

“God loves each of us as if there were only one of us.” ~ Augustine of Hippo

Prayer: Heavenly Father, you fill my life with your love. Thank you. My life can sometimes be a bit of a mess, but I know that I can always come back to you and be refilled with your love. Amen.





A Hopeful Future

Epiphany (6th January)

Read: 1 Peter 1:3-9

“In his great mercy he has given us a new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, and into an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade. This inheritance is kept in heaven for you...” 1 Peter 1:3b-4 (NIV)

We are into day 6 of a new year... how is it going so far? I am sure we have already reneged on our New Year resolutions. Some things that we hoped would happen with the New Year, may not have happened and some we hoped were gone forever, have resurfaced. How do you see your future this year? Is it filled with hope or dread? Today is Epiphany when we remember the wise men travelling and seeing the baby Jesus, giving their gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh. They followed a star. A light sent from God to guide and lead them to where He wanted them. Their journey was a journey of hope in seeing the Christ-child and worshipping God in human form. We don't know what they expected to see, but we are not told that they were disappointed.

I have just read a story from the NBC News in 2009: ‘Two brothers, Zsolt and Geza Peladi, lived on the outskirts of Budapest making a living by selling scavenged junk. They have just found out that they and a sister in the US are in line to receive a \$6.6 billion inheritance from a long-lost grandmother. Lawyers handling the estate of the grandmother who recently died in Baden-Wurttemberg, Germany sought out and found the family. “We knew our mother came from a wealthy family, but she was a difficult person and severed ties with us, then later abandoned us and we lost touch with her and our father until she eventually died,” said Geza Peladi. “If this all works out it will certainly make up for the life we have had until now.”

Imagine the hope we have of a glorious heavenly home prepared for us. Our lives may be difficult now with changing needs and circumstances, but don't lose sight of the future hope that God has for each of us. He has promised us an eternal home, and our God is faithful to all His promises. You will not be disappointed.

Live your year with Jesus knowing about the future hope and home prepared for you by God!

Prayer: My God of faithful promises. Thank you for all the promises that you have shared with me through the Advent season. Shine your hope and promises into my heart and life. I know you will never leave me. Amen.



Lord's Prayer

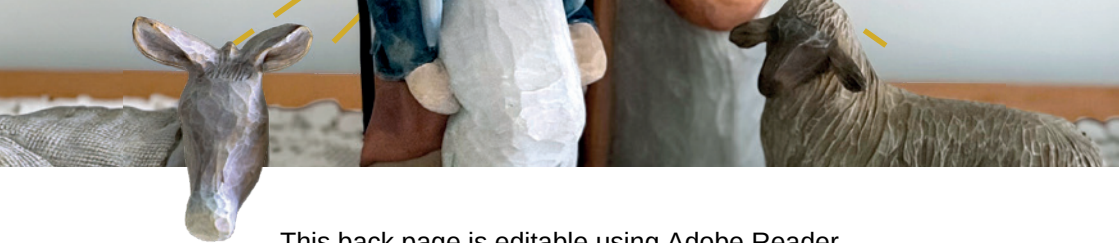
Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as in heaven. Give us today our daily bread. Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us. Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours, now and for ever. Amen.

Luther's Morning Prayer

I thank you heavenly Father, through your dear Son Jesus Christ, that you have protected me through the night from all harm and danger. I ask you to keep me this day too, from all sin and evil, so that in all my thoughts, words and deeds I may please you. In your hands I place my body and soul and all that is mine. Let your holy angel be with me, so that the evil one may have no power over me. Amen

Luther's Evening Prayer

I thank you, heavenly Father, through your dear Son Jesus Christ, that you have graciously protected me today. I ask you to forgive all my sin and the wrong which I have done, and graciously keep me this night. In your hands I place my body and soul and all that is mine. Let your holy angel be with me, so that the evil one may have no power over me. Amen.



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