

November 28, 2022

[Isaiah 2:2-5](#)

I am a Bible reader, but I needed some help with meaning that is relevant and understandable for Advent, the preparation for the Christ child. Let's begin with verse 2 where mountains are often depicted as nations in scripture. Christ will be the highest of all, higher and greater than all the nations of men. In verse 3 we can be confident that Jesus will teach us His ways. To know His ways now in this life can be increased by reading scripture, experiencing the weekly teaching in church, and fellowship with other Christians to encourage them in the ways of Jesus.

Since I am well into the last quarter of my earthly life, I am grateful for God's promise of eternal life for the ultimate sacrifice Christ gave for my sins. As we begin Advent let us be a transformed community in true obedience to God following His commandments and asking for forgiveness when we fall short. Verse 5 concludes with the promise of peace, obedience, and absence of sin. Our eternal reward awaits us, but we can reap the benefits of applying God's word to our lives every day.

Lord, we thank you for the good news and greatest gift and subsequent sacrifice of your son, Jesus, the one and only Christ. May joy, peace, and love permeate and be evident in our lives as we pursue only You and not the exhausting ways of this world in preparation for Christmas and the coming of Jesus.

Jo Ditzel

November 29, 2022

[Isaiah 9:1-7](#)

Gloom, distress, despair, and burdens are feelings that plague us all at various times and in unique circumstances. Nobody is exempt from this as much as we might want to portray ourselves as having it all together or being above the fray. Because we are each wired differently and have unique triggers, how this expresses itself is very specific to us.

When we are in the midst of a trying time, we are always given a choice - do we truly believe that God knows and appreciates what we are going through? Does He really care? Do we really believe God will bring people into our lives to walk beside us and address what ails us? Can God truly make all things right?

The call of faith is to trust that the God who knows you the most (warts and all!) loves you the most. God knows what you are going through and can help you weather the storm. But God is also not simply content to leave us as we are. The promises of Scripture point to abundant life irrespective of the circumstances, and if I am honest, most of my problems stem from my inability to REALLY trust that God has my back through thick and thin. Often, I will lean on my tried and true coping mechanisms as opposed to trusting God's path.

I am not sure if you are in the valley, in the midst of a mountaintop experience, or just lulled to sleep by the doldrums of life. What I do know is that God promises more - will you keep trusting yourself or will you trust that God has a better way ahead?

Ryan Walker

November 30, 2022

[Isaiah 11:1-9](#)

In times of sorrow and despair, when I feel overwhelmed by the brokenness of the world, I try to remember a simple phrase: **“already but not yet.”** Despite the confusing, antithetical wording, this phrase is a great source of hope for me. This passage from Isaiah illustrates why.

The Jewish people were looking for a Messiah. Someone who would have the wisdom to know the right and true purposes and the power to carry them out. Someone who would be able to see beyond the surface and listen to the frequencies of the heart. Someone to bring about a new world where wrongs will be made right, peace and safety will reign, and little children will have nothing to fear. Someone to save them.

In our time, we understand that the shoot coming up from the stump of Jesse refers, of course, to the coming of Jesus. Jesus did come with great wisdom, understanding, and power. He judged not by what he saw and heard but by His knowledge and fear of the Lord. And his righteous death means that we can be redeemed and invite the Spirit of the Lord to rest on us.

But the world has **not yet** been made new. And so, we are exiles; already redeemed but not yet inhabiting the renewed world that this passage describes. If you read on in Isaiah, you will come to the promise of 65:17: “See, I will create new heavens and a new earth. The former things will not be remembered nor will they come to mind.” Isaiah chapters 56 through 66 (which I strongly encourage you to read) describe how we can live in this tension, holding fast to God’s promises and preparing for this coming glory. The Advent season provides an opportunity to reflect and act on what that means for you.

In what area(s) of your life do you need to remember that you are already redeemed despite living in a world that has not yet been made new? How might you live in this hope this Advent season?

Lord Jesus, thank you for redeeming us through your death on the cross. We look in hope towards a time when you will make all things new. Until then, give us the wisdom and strength to hold fast to your promises and model your love. Amen.

Matt Niemitz

December 1, 2022

[Isaiah 40:1-11](#)

I've coached wrestling for many years. Advent reminds of the time I walked up to a wrestler lying on the bleachers before his match and said "Hey, it's time for you to warm up, you have a match in a little bit." The wrestler glanced up with a very sleepy look on his face and replied- "Did you ever see a Cheetah warm up before pouncing on its prey?" He then put his head backdown to continue dozing. Apparently, he didn't see the need to limber up before his "attack", so to speak. The only problem is that humans aren't cheetahs. We need a little warm up before we engage in something strenuous; we need to put in a little preparation before we exert ourselves because we're more likely than a cheetah to pull a muscle if we don't.

We've just entered the season of Advent, the time leading up to Christmas. It's typically referred to as a time of preparation. The text for this week comes from Isaiah 40:

A voice cries out:

*'In the wilderness prepare the way of the LORD,
make straight in the desert a highway for our God.*

Apparently, there's something about the work of God that needs a warmup act. And so, God sent the prophets and John the Baptist to prepare the people for the Messiah. It's not clear why the need to prepare the people for Jesus' coming, but it may have had something to do with the idea that following Jesus is meant to be more than a cerebral event; rather it's intended to involve one's whole self. It seems to have been an attempt to get the people limbered up for what was about to take place. The birth of Jesus was meant to usher in a call to follow God in a way that would involve more than just the mind but every fiber of one's being. I think too often the idea of "following Jesus" is a nice catch-phrase but it doesn't usually take on the full-bodied experience that God wants it to. To follow, is intended to utilize every muscle and in order to do that we need a little preparation. We need to get up off the bleachers and start warming up; to start preparing to live as disciples.

Advent should be more than preparation for Christmas morning; it should be preparation for following Christ. This Advent, I invite you to join me as together we commit to some warmup before we get involved in the central activity of following. Let's start each day in prayer and reflection. We need to prepare our spiritual muscles before we head out to take on the day. Join me throughout the month of December by limbering up before we start our day. A wrestler shouldn't go into his match without a little preparation, and we shouldn't begin our day without it either. When we wake up in the mornings during Advent, perhaps we can engage in some prayerful exercises where we ask God to give us the strength and the courage to follow with not only our minds but our whole selves.

Steve Allen

December 2, 2022

[Isaiah 61:1-4](#)

As I read this passage, I can't help but be reminded of our community group study, "Undistracted." In the last session, we were reminded to stay focused on our purpose, and this passage alludes to that purpose as well. We are called to care for the hungry, the thirsty, the strangers, the naked, the sick, those in prison, widows, and orphans.

In Matthew 25:40, Jesus says, "Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me." Just as Isaiah is telling us to proclaim the good news to the poor, the broken-hearted, captives and prisoners. In the Christmas season, so many of us are blessed with the presence of friends, family, and loved ones, and it's easy to forget the broken people we encounter every day. I know I want to try and be the person Jesus calls us to be and have my "head on a swivel" with eyes out for ways I can care for God's children. It might be a smile, a kind word, an afternoon or evening volunteering, or serving those we are called toward.

Let's all remember this as we walk through Advent together.

Lord, I pray that you would give us all eyes to see the opportunities to care for your flock and fulfill the prophecy in Isaiah of proclaiming your good news. May we all be the oaks of righteousness we are called to be. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Sam Martin

December 5, 2022

[Galatians 4:4-6](#)

In Galatians, Paul is writing to counter the Judaizers who are trying to convince the new Christians to go back to following the law, giving up their free life in Jesus. Earlier in the letter, Paul describes the law as how God disciplined the nation and prepared the people for the coming of Christ. In this passage, he points out that Jesus' birth in Bethlehem was not an accident; it was an appointment to redeem those who had been kidnapped by the law. Jesus came in the fullness of time. To go back into the law would be to undo the very work of Christ on the cross. Paul is telling us that as sons (and daughters) of Christ we are fully free to enjoy the spiritual riches as an heir of God through Christ. God didn't pay the price to make us slaves, but sons. When we choose Christ, God sends the Holy Spirit into our lives crying out "Abba, Father," showing the closeness of the believer to the Father. It's that spiritual freedom that Paul is writing to protect – for the Galatians and for us today.

Cece Webster

December 6, 2022

[1 Thessalonians 5:1-11](#)

As of writing this, I have just started reading “The Comfort Crisis,” by Michael Easter. The book’s premise is that, as humans, we need to experience some level of regular discomfort to maintain our physical and mental health. According to Mr. Easter, only 0.004 percent of human history has been lived in the relative comfort associated with the last century or so. That blip on the human timescale has been insufficient for our physiology to catch up to our technology. Worrying about our children’s choice of college, whether we can afford a vacation home, or the latest trend on social media doesn’t compare to worrying about whether we will have enough to eat, whether our rudimentary shelter will prevent death from exposure, and whether our children will die from the next round of influenza or other disease. The author’s antidote for our collective anxiety, obesity and general-ill health is to reset our minds and bodies through intentional self-infliction of discomfort in the form of physical challenges that invite cold, hunger, and exhaustion.

The Christians of Thessalonica chose discomfort by standing firm in their faith despite severe persecution. Paul’s words of encouragement point out that those who say “Peace and safety” are too comfortable. They are complacent in their faith, and they are not prepared for wrath of God that may come upon them like a thief in the night. In contrast, those who remain true to their faith, even if it means choosing discomfort, live their lives in daylight and will be prepared for the wrath of God because they are protected by the constant light of faith in Christ.

While the advent season is generally focused on the celebration of Jesus’ first arrival, this passage is a reminder that we need to live our lives with a focus on his second arrival. Just as Mr. Easter prescribes discomfort for mental and physical health, Paul made the same prescription for spiritual health. We should live our lives intentionally and not wander through our spiritual life as if we were asleep or drunk. Being a Christian is not about living our lives in comfort and sometimes requires difficult choices, but we can live in the comfort that remaining true to our faith will save us from an eternity of discomfort.

John Martin

December 7, 2022

[1 Corinthians 15:20-28](#)

Everybody Comes Alive In Christ

God, what were you thinking when you spurred me to write on 1 Corinthians 15:20-28? I come back to the text on the day this devotional is due, and the words taste like ancient chewing gum. All flavor is gone.

What am I to do, God? Miriam is waiting for inspiring words.

As I sit still and ponder, I am drawn to switch my computer's Biblegateway.com app to the Message translation. New power is infused.

"If corpses can't be raised, then Christ wasn't, because he was indeed dead," says verse 20. "And if Christ weren't raised, then all you're doing is wandering about in the dark, as lost as ever." As I grope for words, I can totally relate to the experience of wandering about in the dark, as lost as ever. Maybe you are here, God. You meet me in my dead-end moment.

"It's even worse for those who died hoping in Christ and resurrection, because they're already in their graves," the Scripture continues, bringing to my mind all of our loved ones who have died hoping in Christ and the resurrection. "If all we get out of Christ is a little inspiration for a few short years, we're a pretty sorry lot." If all we get out of the baby Jesus is a little inspiration for our few short years on earth, then what happens to us next?

"But the truth is that Christ *has* been raised up, the first in a long legacy of those who are going to leave the cemeteries," God's Word brings us life. "There is a nice symmetry in this: Death initially came by a man, and resurrection from death came by a man. Everybody dies in Adam; everybody comes alive in Christ."

A nice symmetry, I like that dynamic. Balanced. Matching first with last. Connecting our beginning with our end. Everybody comes alive in Christ.

“But we have to wait our turn: Christ is first, then those with him at his Coming, the grand consummation when, after crushing the opposition, he hands over his kingdom to God the Father. He won’t let up until the last enemy is down—and the very last enemy is death!”

We are forced to wait, to wait our turn. Christ blazes our pathway forward, the first in a long legacy of those who will leave their cemeteries. After Christ crushes death, the final opposition, he will hand over his earthly kingdom to the Father of us all.

“When everything and everyone is finally under God’s rule, the Son will step down, taking his place with everyone else, showing that God’s rule is absolutely comprehensive—a perfect ending!” concludes our final verse.

Christ is born on Christmas day so that *everybody* comes alive. Eternity together, for everything and everyone, is God’s perfect ending! What a burst of new flavor for us to chew on today.

Sue Allen

December 8, 2022

[Colossians 1:15-20](#)

This book of the Bible describes events that took place around AD60-61 in Colossae (Colosse). Paul wrote this story to the church there as they were under attack from false teachers who were defaming the divinity of Jesus. He was calling out the heretical teachers. Paul's letter confirms the nature of Jesus Christ as Creator and Redeemer as the non-negotiable. Paul's letter was attempting to bring wisdom to the Colossian church so that this church would know God's greatness and glory. Paul recognizes that God is the Maker and has "All Authority" which to me epitomizes the use of the term **Yahweh**. Christ is the head of the church (Paul attempts to convince Colosse of this, to recognize Him first) as Christ is first in everything, and his blood sacrifice made the peace between everything on earth and heaven.

Trey Tolbert

December 9, 2022

[2 Peter 3:3-13](#)

The author of 2 Peter, probably the last-written book in the New Testament, is addressed to those who have received “a faith as precious as ours” to encourage them to grow “in the knowledge of our God and Savior Jesus Christ.” The writer (whom most scholars believe was not Simon Peter but wrote in his name to lend authority to his words) warns his early Christian readers against false teachers who would undermine their apostolic faith tradition and lead them astray.

In this passage, the author addresses the teaching of scoffers who doubt the Lord’s promise to return, indulge themselves, and argue that the present world will continue as it is forever. Although this letter is addressed to readers of the first/second century A.D., these issues are just as alive today.

First, the author reminds his readers that the world has not always been as it is today. He accuses the false teachers of willfully ignoring the Genesis accounts of God’s creation of the world from watery chaos, its destruction by water in the flood, and the coming judgement of the world by fire. (While the reference to fire may reflect the influence of Stoic beliefs, it also echoes the association of fire with judgement and the purification of God’s redeemed people in the Old Testament.)

Second, the writer echoes Psalm 90:4 in pointing out that God’s time is not the same as our time and so what seems to us a delay is simply a demonstration of God’s patient desire for us to repent. He refers to the judgement promised by the prophets Amos and Joel on the Day of the Lord, which, as Jesus said, will come like a thief in the night. On this Day of the Lord, all things hidden on earth will be disclosed and judged. Therefore, in consciousness of this coming revelation and judgement, we are to lead “lives of holiness and godliness,” looking forward to a “new earth where righteousness is at home.”

It is so easy for us to think that the world we know with our senses is the only reality. But that is a world that has no room for a God who is both sovereign over us and loving enough to join us in this world of suffering and injustice.

This Scripture passage reminds us that Christians have long been recognized as a people who live in this world but are not of this world. Perhaps nowhere is that

more obvious than in the observance of the liturgical calendar, the Church year that begins with Advent. This calendar reminds us that time itself has a new meaning for those who follow Jesus. No longer is time simply something that begins with the Big Bang and ends in the collapse of the universe in a black hole, or, more personally, begins with our own birth and ends with our death.

During Advent, we are especially called to look forward to a new earth, a reality of grace, mercy, and self-giving love that, though as real as what we know with our five senses, is often obscured. Let us pray then that, in this time of waiting, we may catch a glimpse of that Day of the Lord in the Christ child.

Walter DuPre

December 12, 2022

[Mark 14:60-65](#)

The Advent Season is a time to sit and wait - to ponder the living God who will come to redeem us. That should bring us great joy – to know that we will be saved by Grace. However, we also know that Jesus must be sacrificed for us to receive that Grace.

The only time I have had a glimpse into something like the sacrifice that God, the Father, made when he offered his own son, was the night I found out that my cousin Nicholas had been killed while serving in the Air Force. The family found out late on a Saturday night. We all drove to my aunt and uncle's house to be with them when they arrived home. About 3 or 4 in the morning, a large group of family members gathered to grieve. My uncle led us in a prayer for Nicholas, knowing that his family had sacrificed a son, and that their son was redeemed by another Father's sacrifice. In that moment, I had a small glimpse of the sacrifice that God made for all of us.

As we contemplate the birth of Christ (and the absolute joy that it brings), let us also remember (and not lose sight of) the sacrifice that he made for us, so that we may all be redeemed by his Grace.

John Hackney

December 13, 2022

[Ezekiel 34:11-31](#)

During my junior year of college, I spent a semester studying in the UK. It was my first time in Europe and before settling in London we spent a few weeks traveling throughout Britain. After years of admiring movies and art set in the English countryside, I was beyond excited to be seeing the rolling hills and picturesque fields of sheep in person. I remember clearly the first time I got to walk in one of those picturesque fields and thinking, "This is absolutely beautiful but, wow, this really smells...and there is SO much poop." Needless to say, my idealized version of the scene got a dose of reality.

Reading this passage, I am reminded that we need God as our shepherd because life, like those fields, is really messy. We strive in vain to create an idealized life for ourselves but what we need is to trust God, our shepherd, as he navigates us through the challenges, struggles, and joys of life.

Jane Wilkinson

December 14, 2022

[Luke 1:26-38](#)

Most are very familiar with this scripture, especially during this time of year; however, the part of the scripture that stands out to me the most are verses 37 and 38. It reads, “For no word from God will ever fail,” and then Mary goes on to say, “I am the Lord’s servant, may your word to me be fulfilled.” Mary just heard the most *life-changing* news of her life, yet she knows that if God made this promise that it will be fulfilled, and she immediately responds that she is ready. Even through her fear and inability to see the plans for her future, she was able to fully trust and know that God had it all figured out.

There are so many times in my own life that I feel the nudge of the Holy Spirit telling me of God’s plans and promises, yet I continually push back and think that my own way of planning for my life is better. We go to Him in the big decisions, and even then, we often question God’s plans for us. I read this scripture and pray to have the faith of Mary. I desire to hear of God’s promises and plans for us and to immediately respond, “Yes God, I am ready and I trust in your plan.”

Lindsey Porter

December 15, 2022

[Luke 1:39-56](#)

The story begins with Mary visiting Elizabeth, both expecting, Elizabeth with John the Baptist and Mary with the Messiah! When Mary spoke, the baby in Elizabeth's womb heard the greeting and leaped for joy. John the Baptist is already performing his task of pointing people to the Messiah.

How might we point people to Jesus during the Christmas season while we wait for our Savior's birth? Acknowledging and smiling at those working at the grocery store, restaurant, dry cleaners, etc., will bring joy to that person. A simple smile can go a long way. Being patient and kind when someone is not deserving. Loving our neighbor as ourselves. It is the small day to day moments where God's light will shine through us and point the way.

After Elizabeth rejoices, Mary breaks out in song praising God for what He has done and will do for the world through her. Her song of praise, called the Magnificat, is all about God's goodness, His blessings and mercy, and helping the oppressed. What is remarkable about this song is how little it is about how special Mary is. Mary is incredibly humble and has embraced the gift God has given her.

Heavenly Father, I pray that we can accept your gifts with such joy and humbleness. I pray that your light will shine through us to glorify you and point others to your love and mercy. Give us patience to "Be still" and wait on our Savior's birth. Thank you for being God with us and for us in our moments of joy and sadness. As the song says, "My soul glorifies the Lord, and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior!" Amen.

Kimberly Oliver

December 16, 2022

[Matthew 1:18-25](#)

You have likely heard or read this passage many times over the years as it describes the birth of Jesus. I'm not sure that I have ever really taken time to think about the birth of Christ from his earthly father, Joseph's, perspective. We so often focus on Mary, how she is approached by an angel and told that she will carry the Son of God. In this passage, we learn more about what Joseph experiences as it relates to his son's birth. The faithfulness of both Mary and Joseph is extraordinary. Joseph, a gentle and righteous man, accepts his role in becoming the father of the Son of God. Though he was likely afraid of staying engaged and marrying a woman who conceived a child before marriage, he followed the commands of the angel. He truly listened to the Lord, followed the plan laid before him, and trusted that all would be well.

Have you ever found yourself in a moment where you felt a nudge from God or heard God speaking clearly to you about something, but thought, "Surely this is not for me?" It is challenging to fully trust that God is in control of our lives and will guide and direct us if we truly listen. When we feel called to do something, it requires us to take action, just as Joseph took action to take Mary home as his wife and trusted that all would be well with the birth of their son, Jesus. To accept that God might have something planned for our lives, even if we do not believe it, want it, or feel that it is right, can be so difficult. During this Christmas season, I pray that each of us is truly listening, with our ears open, as Joseph's were, to the call of our Heavenly Father. Whether you feel a nudge in a small way, or hear angels of the Lord in very loud ways calling you to do something, I pray that you accept it and act upon those instincts. So often we want to live by rules and boundaries of our society, but may we be a trusting and faithful people who are gentle, righteous, and faithful as Joseph.

Julianna Cagle

December 19, 2022

[Luke 2:1-20](#)

True confession – when the doctor first handed (more like launched) my newborn daughter into my arms, I was terrified. In those first few seconds, I felt the full range of human emotions -- exhaustion, fear, wonder, and a wild sense of awe that this little life was mine to hold.

One of my favorite verses in all of Scripture is, “But Mary treasured up all these things and pondered them in her heart.” Mary had just traveled by donkey a week-long journey to Bethlehem. She had given birth in an unfamiliar, uncomfortable stable without her own mother or a midwife to care for her. As she held her raw, fragile infant in her arms, a crowd of shepherds arrived rejoicing with the good news, “your son is a Savior born for you! The Messiah, the Lord!” The scriptures could have said, “Everyone was amazed... *And Mary...*” Yet in every translation I searched, it’s “But Mary...”

But Mary... pondered, how could this fragile, vulnerable infant be the Messiah who had been promised?

But Mary... pondered, why did God choose me to bring this child into the world? Have I done it right?

But... Mary pondered, what does the future hold for my little child, this future king?

Amidst the drama, hurry, and amazement, Mary took a moment for stillness and contemplation.

Mary is the only person in the Bible who is present at Jesus’ birth and at his crucifixion. To care for and love Jesus as one’s own son as well as the Messiah is a conundrum I could never wrap my mind around. So, I love that in this moment, with the full story of Jesus’ life and death yet to be unspooled, Mary depicts an incredibly human moment of wonder and awe, perhaps of fear.

As we approach the celebration of Christ's birth, the beginning of his journey of compassion, of protest, of instruction, and preparation, as the drama unfolds, let us find a moment to pause in the not-knowing just to ponder; to hold out (what may be fragile) hearts in our very human hands to the Lord and make space for wonder.

Dear Lord, we give you thanks for the story of Christ's birth, and for Mary - for her courage, her humility, and for her humanity. Help us make space in this season to pause amidst the celebration and allow for the complex emotions within us to surface-- perhaps fear, doubt, love, hope. Help us remember that you welcome us as we are, before we've worked through it, before we have solutions, or certainty. You do not ask us for these things, only for faith. Amen.

Mary Flynn Niemitz

December 20, 2022

[Matthew 2:1-18](#)

This passage takes place right after Matthew's account of the birth of Jesus. We immediately learn that even in his infancy, Jesus was a threat to people in power. Upon learning of the Messiah baby's birth, King Herod engaged the Magi to find Jesus as he secretly plotted to kill him.

The good news is that God warns the Magi not to return to Herod, so his plans are thwarted and the Holy Family is safe. However, every baby boy age two and under in Bethlehem was killed as a result of Herod's rage. How can this be? It seems so unfair.

I often question God when I experience hard situations or see people hurting, asking, "Why does it have to be this way?" I think we have to be comfortable to come to God with our questions.

And thankfully, because Jesus did live, and then died for us, He knows what it's like to be human and feel pain and sorrow. Our Emmanuel, "God with us," can handle our sorrow and questions. And I think the truth is that there are some sorrows that will only be healed in heaven. But thanks be to God that He loves us and promises to be with us in all things, and comfort us even in mystery. Praise be to God, the Prince of Peace!

Charlotte Marie Sturtz

December 21, 2022

[Luke 2:21-35](#)

The theme that stands out most to me in this passage is waiting, specifically for God's promise. Mary, Joseph, and Simeon wait with obedience until the Lord calls them for their purpose. Mary and Joseph waited in Bethlehem for 40 days (for the circumcision and Mary's ceremonial recovery from birth) before they were called to travel to the temple to offer their sacrifice on behalf of Jesus. Simeon waited expectantly and with devotion to meet the Messiah. God's timing and provision for his people is perfect. The Lord promises and we wait.

I'd like to say I wait patiently and with hope but too often I wonder what's taking God so long to fulfill a promise or a prayer and often question why I'm waiting and for what reason. Even when we wait, the Holy Spirit moves in us and God works on our behalf to fulfill his promises. Can you imagine how Mary felt after hearing Simeon's words about Jesus? Both immense joy and marvel and then I would imagine extreme anxiety and fear knowing "a sword will pierce your own soul too." Yet, we know in Mary's story God fulfilled his promise and delivered to us a Savior.

How will you wait this advent season? Do you believe God is at work in the waiting?

Lord, help me trust you while I wait. I pray for a heart of devotion, like Simeon, that will allow me to abide in your will and trust in your plan and promise. Help me to remember that your timing is perfect and that your will is always done. Thank you for your sovereignty and for our Savior. Be our guiding light this season and reveal to use your immense glory. Amen.

Kate Izlar

December 22, 2022

[Romans 13:11-14](#)

The Day is Near!

It's time to wake up! I said this hundreds if not thousands of times when waking up my 3 boys for school throughout their childhood. We have all probably said this or heard this from our parents. Paul wrote to the Roman Christians because he was eager to preach the gospel to them, to remind them on certain subjects. In this scripture Paul is telling Christians it's time for us to awake. He wants us to be aware of the signs of this earth for Jesus' return. There are signs all around us. We see signs in nature telling us Winter is coming: falling leaves, cooler temperatures. Signs that Springtime is near as buds pop out on trees as the days grow warmer. But do we see the signs of Jesus' return? Paul is saying no Christian should be surprised. There are signs all around us: the conditions in the world in which we live that are horrible, people that are wicked, selfish, unthankful and unholy.

Why should we wake up? Because our salvation is nearer than when we first believed. At the end of each day, we are one day closer and nearer than we realize.

What should we do? Paul tells us we are to cast out all darkness and sinful ways and put on the armor of light. Our life will be controlled either by our flesh or our spirit. We must choose to be intentional with what we plant in our mind. The world pulls us towards selfish ways, but we are to stay focused daily to cast out the darkness in this life, put on our Christian armor of truth, righteousness, peace and joy. Jesus is coming soon to deliver his church from this present world. It's time to wake up!

Dear Lord, I pray today that you will help me understand the areas in my life that need to change, for the time is near. Awaken me from slumber and cast out any darkness, sinful or hurtful behaviors so I may walk in your will each day.

Nan Young

December 23, 2022

[Romans 15:4-13](#)

I vividly remember the excitement that accompanied my family's tradition of getting to open the Advent calendar each morning this time of year. Behind the cardboard flaps for each day leading up to Christmas awaited a piece of milk chocolate. Although the idea of chocolate for breakfast has not lost its appeal for this chocolate-lover, marking the days of Advent have taken on a different rhythm for me this past decade. In November of 2012, I remember receiving an email during the season of Advent from Laura Thompson, the mother of my boyfriend at the time. She was writing to share her favorite Advent Devotional with me. Try as I might, I cannot seem to find that email or remember her Advent Devotional recommendation. Nonetheless, I remember her planting this seed in me of a new, adult way to set aside time each day of Advent to turn to God's word and reflect. About a month after I received that email, Laura passed away from a long battle with breast cancer. It certainly feels like a full circle moment to be able to contribute to Kairos's Advent Devotional.

This particular scripture has resonated with me so much in my own season of waiting and anticipation. Paul reminds the Romans of God's gift of hope and His desire to see each and every one of us filled with joy and peace by believing in Him. I found myself in need of that same reminder the day I read this scripture last year with a group of Kairos women pledging to read the Bible in a year alongside each other. In the Bible reading plan we had committed to, this very scripture was assigned on a particular day when hope seemed so far away for something my heart yearned for—a child. And yet on that day, I read Romans 15:13 in the morning and found out later in the day that I was pregnant. This Word of God was reminding me then, now, and in times to come, to hold fast to hope. The hope we have in Jesus who is and was and will forever be our greatest gift! William, my husband, and I chose this verse, Romans 15:13, for our daughter, Laura "Blair" Thompson.

Beth Thompson