



## 2020 Advent Devotional



*I must go on boasting. Though there is nothing to be gained by it, I will go on to visions and revelations of the Lord. 2 Corinthians 12:1*

## Trinity Presbyterian Church's 2020 Advent Devotional

Psalm 126:1-2 "When the Lord restored the fortunes of Zion, we were like those who dream. Our mouths were filled with laughter, our tongues with songs of joy."

This is our 16<sup>th</sup> issue of Trinity's Advent Devotional. Since 2005, the Christian Education Committee has provided the congregation each year with a collection of devotions written by members and friends of Trinity. Our theme for this year is "Those Who Dream." This theme comes from [A Sanctified Art](#) and we will be following this theme in worship and in our virtual Bible studies. This year we have included some words and devotions from [A Sanctified Art](#) in our Advent Devotional. Here is an excerpt on why they chose this theme:

"What does it look like to live as those who dream? The prophets, the psalmists, John the Baptist, Mary, Elizabeth, Joseph, Simeon, Anna, the shepherds and the Magi—they all were dreamers. They received, discovered, and responded to God's dreams for the world. In Advent, we step into the mystery and awe of God's dreams and pray they shape our reality." [A Sanctified Art LLC](#)

We give our heartfelt thanks to all the contributors who have shared their inspirational thoughts to help all of us better prepare once again to celebrate the birth of our Savior, Jesus Christ.

A special thanks to Shelley Wheeler for her hard work editing and putting together this year's edition and a special thanks to Paula Benham for her donation to cover the cost of printing.

We pray that these devotions will bring you hope, joy, peace, love and encourage you to never stop dreaming.

Blessings,

**The Christian Education Committee**

## **Dream, Don't Sleep**

### **Mark 13:24-37 & 2 Peter 3:8-15**

They say you will come like a “thief in the night,”  
The hour unclear, the day easily feared.  
But I toss these words over the edge of my tongue,  
And they don't taste right.  
A thief is one that I lock out.  
A thief is the one that I fear.  
So I ask myself—  
Did I downgrade you to no more than a thief, Great Builder?  
Did you form me from the dust,  
Breathe life into my bones,  
And paint the horizon into the sky, all for me?  
And was all of that fine,  
Until you asked me to love my neighbor as myself?  
Was all of that fine,  
Until you said, “Dream, don't sleep”?  
Was all of that fine,  
Until you asked me to wake up to the suffering in the streets?  
Did I imprison you to the role of the thief  
To keep you from getting too close?  
Forgive me, Great Builder.  
Tear down the door to my house.  
Crawl through the window.  
Slip through the attic fan.  
Dance in the security light.  
Scream through the letterbox until I hear you again.  
For this house is your house.  
You built it.  
You belong here.  
I am begging you,  
Break back in.

**Poem by Sarah Are**  
**A Sanctified Art LLC**

November 30, 2020

## Social Distancing

### Scripture: Jeremiah 29:11

The year was 1665. The bubonic plague was again sweeping through Europe, and in England, among other measures taken, the universities were closed in order to maintain social distancing; sound familiar? Cambridge University closed, and among those who had to leave was 23 year old Isaac Newton, who had just received his undergraduate degree. He would return to Cambridge later as a Fellow and eventually become Professor. But now he was just an unemployed young man who returned to his parent's farm to wait until the university could re-open.

So what did he do during this self-imposed quarantine? Well, there being no TV or video games, he invented calculus. Now if you're like me and struggled to even understand calculus, the idea of sitting by yourself in a farmhouse and inventing this amazing branch of mathematics upon which much of modern science and engineering depends is incomprehensible. He also developed his theory of light and much of his laws of motion. No surprise that this has been called his *annus mirabilis* ("wonder year").

Now, I don't, by any means, believe that God causes evil things to occur so that good can happen. But I do think that when bad things happen, for whatever reason, people often respond in remarkable ways. Would the young Isaac Newton have invented calculus even if he didn't have this year of isolation? Who knows? But he did do remarkable things during that tragic time. Will something equally remarkable come out of this terrible year 2020? During this time of pandemic I have been very cautious; not going out of the house very much, spending a lot of time in my recliner reading. I'm afraid that I haven't invented anything close to calculus. But is there some 23-year-old somewhere who, because of the isolation forced upon us all, is developing something that will make the world a better place? Advent is a time of hope. And I do have hope that something good will come of all the disease, death, and turmoil.

***Prayer: Lord, help us to walk in your light, and live our lives in faith and hope.***

**Del Smith**

## Revive Our Faith

### **Psalm 80: 17-19**

17 Let your hand rest on the man at your right hand, the son of man you have raised up for yourself.

18 Then we will not turn away from you; revive us, and we will call on your name. 19 Restore us, LORD God Almighty; make your face shine on us, that we may be saved."

Our lives are filled with opportunity...we just have to recognize it as such. Stop seeing roadblocks and problems and see possibilities instead. God will always show us the right path.

As part of the Visioning effort for Trinity, I had to look at our church roadblocks and see how to get past them. I worked with a wonderful group of fellow church members to develop a Strategic Plan for Trinity. We used meetings, collaboration, and observations, but the essential ingredient was "inspired imagination". The Plan we put forward to Session contained essential goals and potential tactics. All of it was "inspired" by God. The "imagination" also came from God. We can cultivate "inspired imagination" in our everyday lives by facing our trials with a prayer of hope and guidance.

***Dear God,***

***Please see what I am facing in my life and show me how I can get through it while glorifying You. You have blessed my life, given me what I need, and brought me here. Now show me where you will lead me next. Let me feel the peace of Christ. Amen***

**Tracy Martin**

December 2, 2020

## God's Hand of Hope

### Romans 8:28

"And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love Him, who have been called according to His purpose."

As a child in Catholic grade school, God called me to be an altar boy. Back then, we memorized all the liturgical responses in Latin. All through high school and four years in the Air Force, my role as a servant continued faithfully. Then I entered college and fell away from the church. Unfortunately for me, the voices of the 60's and 70's were louder and more inviting than the voice of God. Although my back was turned from God, His hand continued to reach out to me in hope.

A pivotal moment occurred in November 1984. My wife's parents invited us to have our 5-year-old daughter baptized during our Thanksgiving visit. Reverend George Mehaffey did the baptism in the hall that now bears his name. A seed of hope was planted! Shortly after that our son was born. Just after his 3rd birthday, my dad died. To say that my life was a struggle is an understatement.

God reached out in hope and called our family to join the church where my wife had grown up so our son could enter into their prestigious preschool. Within a short time, we found ourselves in a Sunday school class studying Paul's letter to the Romans. God's hand of hope led me through the study of Grace by Faith, and His forgiveness through the blood of Jesus, whom I accepted as my Lord and Savior. It truly was Good News...News of Hope.

God again offered His hand of hope to lead me into a recovery program that has supported me for over 30 years. My sponsor taught me to ask God to take away the compulsion--and don't forget to thank Him every day. By 2002-2003, Romans 8:28 was my mantra as God was victorious in my Lymphoma battle and guided eight of us on the PNC to choose a new pastor for our church. Our hope in God's choice for a pastor has resulted in a 17 year tenure of spiritual leadership for a once aging congregation.

So, if these difficult times get you down, remember God's hand of hope is always there for you.

***Prayer: Thank You God for sending Jesus to save us from our sins. Thank you for your hand of hope. Amen***

**David Tiernan**

## **We Dream of a Peaceful World**

### **Mark 13: 24-37**

In January 2020 we heard of the first case of Covid-19 and that China had discovered it there.

Flight restrictions from China were put in place. The first deaths were reported in February and verified by April. By the end of March, cases were reported in all 50 states, DC, and all US territories.

By mid-March, schools were shutting down and all large gatherings were called off. No church, Sunday school, Bible Study, or circle meetings were being held.

By the end of May, the unfortunate death of a gentleman involving the police erupted into rioting, looting, and burning in Seattle, followed by additional incidents and more rioting in Minneapolis, Chicago, New York City, Atlanta, Louisville, Detroit, Denver, Memphis, Kansas City, and in Portland, Oregon, 80 days through August 20th. There was more than \$23,000,000 of damage done to property and lost revenue in Portland alone.

Unable to interact with others and isolated, child abuse cases and spouse abuse cases greatly increased. The impact of unemployment from so many businesses created (and still create) great financial difficulties in many families. A ripple effect hits the entire U.S. and world. Economies look bleak.

What now? How to overcome?

Sweet hour of prayer, sweet hour of prayer that calls me from a world of care, and bids me at my Father's throne make all my wants and wishes known! In the season of distress and grief, my soul has often found relief, and oft escaped the tempter's snare, by thy return, sweet hour of prayer.

***Prayer: Our Heavenly Father, you are the answer. We need you, how we need you, in what seems to be the darkest of hours. We come to you seeking peace, knowing of your unending love. Amen***

**Lois Settles**

December 4, 2020

## ***Hope: Pray Without Ceasing is Important to Everyone***

Mark 11: 22-25 Jesus answered them, "Have faith in God. 23 Truly I tell you, if you say to this mountain, 'Be taken up and thrown into the sea,' and if you do not doubt in your heart, but believe that what you say will come to pass, it will be done for you. 24 So I tell you, whatever you ask for in prayer, believe that you have received it, and it will be yours. 25 "Whenever you stand praying, forgive, if you have anything against anyone; so that your Father in heaven may also forgive you your trespasses."

Phillipians 4: 4-7 Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, Rejoice. 5 Let your gentleness be known to everyone. The Lord is near. 6 Do not worry about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. 7 And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

When I was in my twenties, I always thought that one should not bother God with trivial prayer requests until my neighbor invited me to go with her to the Women's Bible Study at First Presbyterian Church in Winston Salem, North Carolina. When she was having a hard time finding a parking place, she said out loud, "Dear Jesus, please help me find a parking place." And there it was! I felt surprised that she had prayed for a parking place.

The Bible study lesson was Pray without Ceasing. Another woman in the study described how there were gifts for everyone, all one needed to do was ask the Lord. The next year my oldest son, who had been struggling with epilepsy and the side effects of his medication, had a brain scan to see if we would be able to reduce his medication. The scan had not shown enough significant reduction to warrant a reduction in medication. I asked for prayers for him from our church prayer group. His tests were completed again and the doctor said the tests revealed a complete healing and no scarring or spikes on his brain. He asked me if we had prayed for my son's healing because it was a miracle. He stopped all medication immediately and my son never had another episode.

The first time we went to Trinity, I told Ross Royce that my other son was in Iraq. Ross asked the church to pray for him and he did return safe. Now I pray for everything constantly: where is my phone, keys, help with golf, thoughts, children, etc. Jesus wants to be our friend as well as our savior.

***God, I am so thankful that you are never more than a prayer away from me. Amen***

**Alison Reid**



December 5, 2020

## Righteousness and Peace

**Psalm 85: verse 8** "I will listen to what God the Lord will say, he promises peace to the people. Verse 14 "Righteousness goes before Him and prepares the way for his steps."

In these days of the pandemic, marches, riots, and such, it is hard to imagine the world as it was or as we hoped it would be. In normal times, it is easier to do memorable acts of kindness and righteousness. In these more difficult days, what I have determined to do is a version of the same thing. I email, I phone, I send cards. What is missing is human contact. Then zoom meetings appeared and you could see and hear people only if you had the right attachments for your computer. We had church services and bulletins online.

I was never thrilled with zoom since there was no sense of fellowship. I also thought it lacked continuity because sometimes people stepped away, couldn't hear, or other difficulties. I found it hard to like or enjoy.

Since then we have had vespers, meetings, and now we are back having church services indoors. "Socially distant" and "masked" is the hallmark of the new normal. I think it will take people time to adjust to the new way. I don't see it changing quickly. For me and I am sure others, it will take some getting used to. But as long as we remember that our Lord is always with us, we can do anything.

The one thing we can do is read the Bible and pray. Inner peace is necessary in these different times. One of the scriptures that I have added to my nightly prayers is from the 23rd Psalm. I have used it as a breath prayer, driving my car in heavy traffic, and many other places. Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life and I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever.

***Dear Heavenly Father, In these trying times, please stay near and grant me peace. Give us a song of joy to sing even if we cry. In Jesus' name, we pray. Amen***

**Carol Graff**

December 6, 2020

## Prepare

### Mark 1: 1-8

My dad built me a changing table.

For 9 months, my mom watched her ankles swell and her belly grow.

For 9 months, my dad would come home from work, kiss her on her forehead-

Pressing bangs to skin—and tell her she was beautiful.

Then for 9 months, he'd slip into the garage

To build sawdust sandcastles and a dresser out of dreams.

I imagine she smiled, perched in that rocking chair.

He was in his woodshop, preparing the way.

18 years later I left for college

As I packed my bags, my mom baked blueberry muffins for the road—

The smell of home.

She wrapped them in foil and placed them in a cardboard box,

Willing similar layers of protection to be wrapped around me, her little girl.

She was preparing the way.

My aunts and uncles bought sweatshirts in my new school colors.

My dad taught me how to change a tire.

My mom gave me the earrings I'd been sneaking from her jewelry box for the last 4 years.

I hid sticky-note love letters on the kitchen door for them to find when they returned home.

We were quiet in the car.

My brother cried.

We were all preparing the way.

And through the moments, I have come to see,

That preparation and love can be the same thing.

For there is something about love that makes us want to prepare.

There is something about love that compels us to:

Throw open the doors,

Yell it from the rooftop,

Se the table,

Decorate the nursery,

Leave love notes on the back door,

Build the changing table,

Trim the tree,

Bake muffins for the road,

And when it's time,

If you must,

Let go.

Preparation and love can be the same thing.

Amen

**Poem by Sarah Are**

**A Sanctified Art LLC**

## Stop, Look, Listen, and Trust

**Psalms 46 1-2**, 10 *God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. Therefore we will not fear even though the earth be removed, and though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea". "Be still and know that I am God."*

"The Psalms are a tapestry of human emotions. The poetry of prayer weaves together anger, fear, joy, longing, despair, praise, and passion. This verse sums up God's response to those prayers. Its truth is the thread of peace and comfort that run through the entire book of Psalms, as well as the rest of the Bible-and the life of every individual who walks with God. God's answer to those who are emotionally troubled is brief and straightforward: stop and remember who is on your side." -Hallmark Books, 100 Favorite Bible Verses, pg. 42

In our TPW bible study for 2020 our series is titled "Into the Light. Finding Hope Through Prayers of Lament." This year's study opened my eyes to who, what, where, when and why of lamenting. I have been always hesitant to complain to God. I mean, who am I to question him, and make him angry at me, by questioning him? By definition, lament is an emotional statement of sorrow or grief. But more than its definition, lament gives me a constructive why to have a frank conversation with God, to pray more to God, to help me focus on the actual situation that led me to lament, and to show God that I do have faith in God.

The sorrowful passing of my mother, the isolation of the pandemic, and the closed social groups that used to be open, have disrupted my natural tendency to have joy, laughter, and uninhibited silliness. My "glass half full" personality is having a hard time being. However, as I set in quietness my soul does find peace knowing that I am a child of Christ and I am not alone. I know that for me to be what God intended me to be is to trust him.

**Prayer: Do not worry about anything, but pray and ask God for everything you need, always giving thanks. And God's peace, which is so great we cannot understand it, will keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Philippians 4: 6-7 NCV**

**Kelli Jebbia**

December 8, 2020

## Peace Be With You

### John 14:27

27 Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid.

2020 has been a stressful year for all of us. Stress has come from the virus, political issues, racial issues, and just surviving all the challenges to stay healthy, safe and sane. It's been extremely hard to find peace.

This verse brings me to a peaceful place. The changes going on in our world are stressful; but God is here to give us peace whenever we seek him and let Him into our thoughts.

Advent is here and this year we will be celebrating differently. Some of us may not feel comfortable coming to church. Even if we do come, we can't 'Pass the Peace'. So much of Christmas is about decorating our homes, baking and eating, and presents. Much of that preparation brings stress to our lives during this time.

I love that most of the Christmas story takes place in an outside setting: the donkey journey, the stable, the shepherds in the field, the Magi, the star and the angels. There was hope, joy, love and peace. These events are the true celebration of Christmas for us.

To experience peace, I need to be outside because it is there that I can see, hear, feel, and be involved in experiencing God's love for me. This warm loving feeling brings me peace during this advent time and always.

My hope for you this Christmas season is that you can get outside and take in all the joy, hope and love that can be felt and seen when we forget about the stresses of the world. Focus on what God has created for us. We should not be afraid or troubled. We should seek God's peace that is available to us wherever and whenever we ask him for it.

***Dear God, Help us find to peace in you this Advent season and help us to pass that peace along to all we come in contact with. Amen***

**Libbie Butler**

December 9, 2020

## Hope for Peace on the Horizon

**Isaiah 64:1-9** (Paraphrased)

*"Oh (God), how I HOPE You return to us pretty soon. And when You do, there won't be any doubt as to Who you are and Why You've come. Those who have denied You by professing themselves to be wise will then know what fools they have been. Even we, who believe, have not been free from sin's shackles. It is our HOPE that You forgive us and our Faith that You will, for Faith is our knowledge of Your promises kept".*

It's my belief that the world, in general, is witnessing another prophetic fulfillment, more now than ever: More hate than love. More earthquakes in diverse places. More violent natural disasters. More acceptance of the "right is wrong and wrong is right" mindset. More nation against nation. U.S. Embassy moved to Israel's capital, Jerusalem. The signing of the UAE/Israeli peace accord. More anti-Semitism than in the day of Jesus Christ who said "REMEMBER, if the world hates you, it hated ME first". More countries aligning against Israel, with Turkey soon to go all-in, joining Iran, Russia, and Syria. Vaccine available soon.....perhaps being mandated. Cryptocurrency (cashless transactions, bitcoin) already gaining ground. Election confusion remember, God is not the author of confusion..... Satan IS. A New World Order gradually falling into place. The 7-year long Tribulation (3 1/2 + 3 1/2) can't be far off. It is preceded by an event that we ought to take a serious look at and HOPE (pray) that WE are included so we don't experience the earth-shaking thrust of God's wrath..... that time when His patience has run out! Otherwise, may God have mercy on our souls. All the 'signs' seem to be looming more like BILLBOARDS. It is my HOPE that we read them.

***Dear God, Help us to see your hand in this world and help us keep our eyes fixed on you during this advent and always!***

***Amen***

**Bob Mack**

December 10, 2020

## Shepherd Leading PEACE

### Isaiah 40: 1-11

As A child I recall being so excited for the Christmas manger scene at church and watching as the children portrayed the different elements: the holy family, angels, shepherds, and Wisemen. The shepherds were so changed by the appearance of the angel and the host of angels singing to them. They took action to go see this thing which was proclaimed so boldly to them. Then telling everyone about what they had seen is an example we should follow. We all hear and respond in our own ways. Are we making the effort to go and tell to help others know God's peace? How can we improve our sharing?

God is referred to as our Shepherd in verse 11 of Isaiah 40 of our scripture passage this week.

"Like a shepherd, He will tend His flock,

In His arm, He will gather the lambs,

And carry them in His bosom,

He will gently lead the nursing ewes." The Ryrie Study Bible New American Standard

The lambs and the ewes are cared for specifically in this passage being gathered, carried, and led. As a Christian, there is great PEACE in knowing God will gather us together. We can understand that we are not alone. God is with us! We will be carried through any of the trials or adversity we may face. Ask and we will receive. He will lead us. All we need to do is follow that lead and receive the PEACE that God is in control. His plan may be bigger than we can understand!

On that precious Christmas night, the shepherds gave the example for us. Listen. Go. Tell all who can hear and find God's PEACE.

***God, help us to be like the shepherds. Help us to listen, go, and tell everyone about you. Amen***

### Jan Markiewicz

Songs for inspiration:(Hoping you may find PEACE in music)

"While Shepherds Watched Their Flocks By Night" by Nahum Tate

"Savior Like a Shepherd Lead Us" by Dorothy A. Thrupp

"Go Tell It On the Mountain" by Mahalia Jackson

December 11, 2020

## Hope

**Proverbs 3:5-6** *"Trust in the LORD with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways submit to him, and he will make your paths straight."*

2020, what a year this has been. I know this year has affected us all in so many different ways. I was back and forth on whether I was going to contribute or not. I know why I was reluctant because my eyes are beginning to fill with tears. My hope is that sharing some of my throes, will bring comfort to someone who may feel as though they have been going through these long months alone. You are not alone. I empathize and understand.

My light has not been burning bright this year. And, the heaviness in my heart has yet to reconcile. At every turn, since January 1st, there has been either an obstacle to hurdle or sadness to deal with, all mixed with a bit of anxiety. In these dark times, I continue to run to God for comfort, healing, and understanding with concerns over my health, important family decisions that need to be made, the unrest in our country, friends who have lost loved ones due to the Coronavirus, including high school friends who have lost a parent, and my best friend whose husband remains unresponsive since January 27th.

Last night was a rough night, as my friend Charleen broke down. She was almost inconsolable. Her strong faith in God is where all her hope lies. Hope is what has kept her going during this most difficult time, as she would just like to have some semblance of her husband Kenny back for her and her three children. Though last night was a time of questioning everything. She wasn't sure she was doing the right thing anymore. Others were placing doubts in her mind, crushing her hope. For a moment her faith had been shaken. She leaned on me for words of comfort. We talked about God's timing and what will be, will be. I helped reinforce what she already knew- God's in control. It was rough. I hate to see her hurting this way, and I wish NYC wasn't so far away. I was glad I could get a little laughter out of her during our talk.

This four-letter word HOPE holds so much power. I think it is my favorite word in the bible.

The only thing I am sure of is that God never fails. He has never failed me. Things may not have gone the way I had wished at times, but I've always trusted that God knows best. These are words I also shared with Charleen.

### **Prayer:**

***Life is heavy for many right now. I continue to pray for God's abundance of love and light to heal us all. I pray for our brothers and sisters to remember that we are brothers and sisters regardless of our race, gender, sexuality, or political views. My hope is that God will unite us all. Amen***

**Jennifer Kaczmarek**

December 12, 2020

## Sabbath Peace

**Psalms 85: 8-13** “I will listen to what God the Lord says; he promises peace to his people, his faithful servants—but let them not turn to folly. Surely his salvation is near those who fear him that his glory may dwell in our land. Love and faithfulness meet together; righteousness and peace kiss each other. Faithfulness springs forth from the earth and righteousness looks down from heaven. The Lord will indeed give what is good, and our land will yield its harvest. Righteousness goes before him and prepares the way for his steps.”

### Journaling Our Dreams

Spend some time journaling. Who is in need of peace and what does it look like for them to receive it?

SABBATH: For dreams take time

There's a reason dreams come to us in our sleep—rest recharges us, connects us with our intuition, expands our imagination, and opens us to receive God's messages. It takes action to bring our dreams to life; it takes rest and time to sustain them. To nourish and sustain yourself as a dreamer, commit to a Sabbath activity today.

Sara Are: A Sanctified Art LLC



December 13, 2020

## Mary

### Luke 1:46-55

When I was young, my church hosted a Christmas pageant.  
Families would show up on Christmas Eve  
With diaper bags and children thrown over their shoulders.  
No amount of Silent Night could quiet that room.  
It was a holy and beautiful chaos.  
What was special about that church Christmas pageant,  
Was we, the children, got to pick our character in the story.  
So for one night, we could be Magi in Burger King crowns.  
We could be angels with wings made of clothes hangers.  
We could be shepherds in bathrobes, protecting the flock.  
We could be Mary, beautiful and brave.  
And the preacher would stand on the steps  
And tell us the Christmas story,  
And as our character entered the scene,  
We would run down the center aisle and assume our place at the manger.  
(As an aside: Is there anything more holy than seeing a child  
Run down that center aisle, as if getting closer to God is all they have in mind?)  
And as the story progressed, the front steps would become crowded  
With dozens of Magi and a wide array of animals,  
But I would always choose Mary.  
I would always choose Mary—  
Mary the teen mom.  
Mary who said, "My soul magnifies the Lord."  
Mary who sang.  
For even at that age, even as a child,  
We could tell that Mary was afraid, and into that dark, Mary sang.  
So I and most of the other little girls in the church that night,  
Would tighten the blue bed sheets draped around our shoulders,  
And run down the center aisle when our name was called.  
For in that moment,  
We were on our way.  
In that moment,  
We were those who dream.  
In that moment,  
We were all Mary.  
In that moment,  
We were brave.

Poem by Sarah Are A Sanctified Art LLC

December 14, 2020

## When Joy Abounds

***Psalm 126: 2-3:*** *Our mouths were filled with laughter, our tongues with songs of joy.*

*Then it was said among the nations, The Lord has done great things for them.*

Lights flashing, sirens blasting, a long line of sheriff's vehicles lined up in front of Target. Deputies quickly exited their vehicles. Children inside them were escorted into Target. All were smiling. All were excited. This was not an emergency. Instead, it was Shop with a Deputy night.

It was a wonder to watch. Each child, paired with a deputy, wandered the store and picked presents for each person in the child's family. Some children knew just what they wanted and rushed to fill their cart. Others were confused and uncertain about how they could afford anything in the store. The deputies reassured those children and asked questions to help choose the perfect gift for each family member. The goal was to make this a positive experience.

We were lucky to be at Target that evening and observe this shopping frenzy. One little boy rushed up to a lovely display of perfumes and body powders. He lifted up a box and turned with a smile. "My mother would love this." Then his face dropped as he muttered, "I can't afford this." The deputy looked at the gift and the price and assured him, yes, you can get this for your mother. The joy on his face is etched forever in my heart.

This program offers so much joy to the children. But it also impacts the deputies as they get to interact positively and help make dreams come true. The other shoppers in Target smiled as they watched the true spirit of Christmas in action.

***Prayer: O, come, little children, O come one and all, To Bethlehem haste, to the manger so small,***

***God's son for a gift has been sent you this night To be your redeemer, your joy and delight. Amen***

***Carol Corson***

December 15, 2020

## Rejoice Always

**Matthew 7: 7-8** *"Ask and it shall be given to you, seek and ye shall find; knock and it shall be opened unto you."*

**1Thessalonians 5: 16-18:** *"Rejoice always, pray without ceasing. In everything give thanks; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you."*

What a joy it has been for us this year to have our faith in God to read and study the Bible. This is the fifth time we have read the Bible out loud to each other. God's word, the Bible, is the greatest story ever told. It is amazing how many movie plots have been taken from the Bible. We both have grown up in the church, Sunday school, and Bible studies, but had not read the Bible cover to cover. Our son suggested we use Charles E. Stanley's Life Principles Daily Bible. Every day there is a reading from the Old Testament, Psalm, and Proverbs. We added The Life Application Study Bible to have more direction. We enjoyed our experience so much we finished the first time in August. Each time we read the Bible we notice more information. It is so interesting to read the history of the Jewish people and of the world. The stories in the Bible have prompted us to read peripheral historical books to learn more about ancient civilizations. We traveled to Ephesus and Corinth. Our guide read passages from Acts about Paul preaching to the gentiles about Jesus our Savior.

After reading the Bible (this year) we decided to study Kings and Chronicles about the Kings of Israel and Judea, the Northern and the Southern Kingdom and the prophets with emphasis on Elijah and Elisha, his successor (2 Kings 2:9, 2 Kings 14:2, 2 Kings: 17:13, Acts 18 and 20, Matthew 12:39-42, Matthew 7: 7-8).

2 Kings 11:25 references the promises of God through Jonah a prophet and book in the Bible. The same day our New Testament lesson was Mathew 12:39-42. In this lesson Jesus refers to when Jonah was sent to Nineveh, the people repented, but when Jesus came to his own people they did not repent. Jesus refers to his resurrection that will prove himself the Messiah. Jonah was in the whale 3 days and was given a new chance and Jesus arose 3 days after his death on the cross.

With this year in great crisis, these daily readings have given us great faith and peace.

***God, Help us to remember that your word is a lamp unto my feet and a light unto my path and that true joy will be found in You.  
Amen***

**Alison and Bob Reid**

December 16 , 2020

## Dreams

**Luke 1: 46-49** *"And Mary said:" My soul glorifies the Lord and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior, for he has been mindful of the humble state of his servant. Now on all generations will call me blessed, for the Mighty One has done great things for me."*

As I am now the parent of a 16-year-old, I am starting to realize that one day soon she will have to launch from my protective arms into this crazy wild world. I have so many dreams for her life. As I read this scripture I wonder what Mary's mother would have felt during this time; her daughter, chosen to carry the Messiah? Would this have been one of her dreams for her little girl? When Hailey was little she wanted to become the first woman president of the United States, I wasn't a fan of this, so I am sure that I would have been hoping that Jesus would have chosen someone else rather than my daughter for this monumental task of carrying the Messiah. But God reminds me, that Trevor and I aren't the only ones who are looking out for our daughter. God has great dreams for her too. He has been there with her from the beginning and will remain with her forevermore. Today, I am reminded of the song "You Raise Me Up" by Josh Groban:

"When I am down and, oh my soul, so weary  
When troubles come and my heart burdened be  
Then, I am still and wait here in the silence  
Until You come and sit awhile with me.

You raise me up, so I can stand on mountains

You raise me up, to walk on stormy seas

I am strong when I am on your shoulders

You raise me up to more than I can be".

We have a job to raise our children up so that they can stand on the mountains and walk on stormy seas. Thanks be to God that He is always with our children on the mountains, in the stormy seas, He holds them on His shoulders and helps them to be more than they can be (or more than we are comfortable with them being ☺).

***God, Raise me and my children up. Help us to remember that in you we find our purpose, our path, and our joy. Amen***

**Brooke Tucker**

## **Sow Joy**

### **Luke 1: 46-55**

If I wanted to sow joy, I wouldn't use words.

I would turn the music all the way up, and push the table against the wall, until we had room to dance.

I would roll the windows down and drive you out of town, until fresh air filled your lungs.

I would squeeze your hand and look you in the eye, so that you would know you are not alone.

I'd lay down the picnic blanket and we'd look at the stars, so that nothing could separate you from God's great beauty.

I'd open my door, like Elizabeth did for Mary. I'd tell you to stay as long as you'd like. Make yourself at home. What's mine is yours.

And maybe we'd sing. And maybe we'd laugh. And maybe it would be enough to be in the presence of God and each other.

If I wanted to sow joy, that's what I'd do. So sing me your song, we've got dancing to get to.

**Sarah Are**

**[Sanctifiedart.org](http://Sanctifiedart.org)**

December 18, 2020

## Joy to the World

**Psalm 98: 4-9** *“Shout for joy to the Lord, all the earth, burst into jubilant songs with music; make music to the Lord with the harp, with the harp and the sound of singing, with trumpets and the blast of the ram’s horn--shout for joy before the Lord, the King. Let the sea resound, and everything in it, the world, and all who live in it. Let the rivers clap their hands, let the mountains sing together for joy; let them sing before the Lord, for he comes to judge the earth. He will judge the world in righteousness and the peoples with equity.”*

One of my favorite Christmas movies of all times is “Elf.” In the movie, Buddy the elf says, “the best way to spread Christmas cheer is singing loud for all to hear.”

This year singing in community is not the safest thing to be doing, but that doesn’t mean that we shouldn’t sing.

Today I encourage you to sing. Sing loud, be jubilant, sing for joy before the Lord.

The good news is that since you aren't singing in community, you don't have to worry about how your voice sounds. Let God hear your joy today and always.

Joy to the world! The Lord is come; Let earth receive her king; Let every heart prepare him room, And heaven and nature sing, And heaven and nature sing, And heaven, and heaven, and nature sing.

Joy to the world! The Savior reigns; Let men their songs employ; While fields and floods, rocks, hills, and plains Repeat the sounding joy, Repeat the sounding joy, Repeat, repeat the sounding joy.

No more let sins and sorrows grow, Nor thorns infest the ground; He comes to make His blessings flow. Far as the curse is found, Far as the curse is found, Far as, far as, the curse is found.

He rules the world with truth and grace, And makes the nations prove The glories of His righteousness, And wonders of His love, And wonders of his love, And wonders, wonders, of His love.

***Dear God, hear my song, hear my joy, hear my praise, hear my love for you. Amen***

**Brooke Tucker**

December 19, 2020

## Sabbath Joy

***Psalm 126*** *"When the Lord restored the fortunes of Zion, we were like those who dreamed. Our mouths were filled with laughter, our tongues with songs of joy. Then it was said among the nations, 'The Lord has done great things for them.' The Lord has done great things for us, and we are filled with joy. Restore our fortunes, Lord, like streams in the Negev. Those who sow with tears will reap with songs of joy. Those who go out weeping, carrying seed to sow, will return with songs of joy, carrying sheaves with them."*

In this space, take some time to journal. Write a dream of joy. Where or how can you sow joy in your life?

SABBATH: For dreams take time

There's a reason dreams come to us in our sleep—rest recharges us, connects us with our intuition, expands our imagination, and opens us to receive God's messages. It takes action to bring our dreams to life; it takes rest and time to sustain them. To nourish and sustain yourself as a dreamer, commit to a Sabbath activity today.

**Sara Are: A Sanctified Art LLC**

December 20, 2020

## To Carry a Dream

### Luke 2:1-20

To carry a dream  
Is to walk at night,  
Or to walk by light,  
But with a pebble in your shoe.  
To carry a dream is to  
Wake at night  
To wake and blink twice,  
In case you see something new.  
To carry a dream  
Is to plant trees in old age,  
To be a part of a church,  
That is human and frayed.  
To carry a dream is foolish and wild.  
It's the faith of a child,  
Wishing on stars.  
But to carry a dream is also hopeful and wise,  
The faith of our elders,  
Saying God will provide.  
So may we walk  
Until we see the light.  
May the pebble in our shoe  
Remind us why we fight.  
May they say  
We are foolish and unwise,  
And may we continue to dream;  
May hope keep us alive.

**Poem by Sarah Are A Sanctified Art LLC**



## Love

### **2 Samuel 7:1-11, 16; Psalm 89:1-4, 19-26; Luke 1:26-45**

One of the library books I reread and enjoyed during the pandemic was “Conspiracy of Kindness” by Steven Sjogren (A Refreshing New Approach to Sharing the Love of Jesus). Sjogren (1942-2015) was instrumental in starting a ministry that went out into his local community doing acts of kindness, for free...washing car windows, shining shoes, cleaning bathrooms at the mall, free car wash, etc., etc. Many of the people his groups encountered were skeptical of their intentions. The Christians had to repeat over and over that they just wanted to show God’s Love in a tangible, practical way. His dream was realized when he subsequently founded a church in Cincinnati that just kept growing and growing.

One of the benefits of being quarantined is that it has allowed us time to rethink how we are able to demonstrate God’s love in a tangible, practical way. Although our neighborhood is reluctant to wear masks, we do try to “be good” and maintain a reasonable distance from one another when chit-chatting. I have seen many small instances of servant evangelism: neighbors driving neighbors to appointments and the grocery store; neighbors blowing leaves in other neighbors’ gutters; neighbors replacing trash cans for neighbors on trash day, etc. I, personally, relocated 5 large turtles who had become disoriented during the last big storm from our front yards to the lake behind us...caring for God’s creatures in a tangible, practical way.

***Lord, thank you for the many opportunities you give us to demonstrate our love for You in tangible, practical ways. In this sometimes overinflated season of “giving”, thank you for the reminder of the basics - your Son and His love for us. Amen.***

***Maudie Parker***

December 22, 2020

## No Difference

**John 3:16** *"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.*

It should make no difference if one is black, white, green, or purple.

It should make no difference if one is tall, short, rich or poor.

It should make no difference if one is Catholic, Protestant, or if of no denomination.

It should make no difference in the food we eat or whether we are disabled or otherwise.

It should make no difference, if our politics differ, nor when we clash over channels watched or things that we read etc, etc, etc.

Well, guess what:

God made us all different for His own reasons. Some say, "that's what makes the world go around." Let's think for a moment, isn't that the definition of our own United States of America? Shouldn't we rejoice in our differences? Even so, God wants us to love one another! Somewhere there is a spark and a glimmer of love only God could put into our hearts, just for one another. That little glimmer of love, though undesirable, shines through, in spite of each and all our differences.

God is love!

God loves us all!

God died on the cross for us all!

There was no difference!

***Dear God, You made us all in your image. Help us to remember that you love each and every one of us. Amen***

**Gloria Scandarinto**

December 23, 2020

## Therefore we are saved by love

**Read Luke 1:26-45** *The story of Mary's encounter with Gabriel followed by Mary's trip to visit Elizabeth.*

I love this story of two women immersed in the promises of their faith, dreaming together about the two babies they carried and the future that might be fulfilled through their lives. Yet they must have been a little scared by their circumstances. These women in a culture of men hold the future of their faith in their hands. What a secret they shared - Elizabeth, an older woman, having a child who would prepare the way for the Messiah, and Mary, an unmarried woman, carrying a child whom she was told would be the very Son of God. They were aware of their history and that Israel was the hope of all the nations. They had been waiting for the time in which God would make sense of all the promises made so long ago. While they might not have totally understood what they had been asked to do, they knew they were not alone. They had each other, hope in God's personal promises, the faith of their forefathers, and the love of God.

Their story reminds me of this quote:

"Nothing that is worth doing can be achieved in a lifetime; therefore we must be saved by hope. Nothing which is true or beautiful or good makes complete sense in any immediate context of history; therefore we must be saved by faith. Nothing we do, however, virtuous can be accomplished alone. Therefore we are saved by love." Reinhold Niebuhr 1951

***Father, may we be as trusting as Mary and Elizabeth even when we are unable to see the total picture. Give us the insight to know and remember that you are always seeking a relationship with us and that your love is our salvation. Thank you for Christ and it is in His name we pray. Amen***

**Martha Gioielli**

December 24, 2020

## Cantique de Noel

**John 1:14** *“The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the one and only Son, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth.”*

“O Holy Night”

This night, unlike any other night, reveals to us, to all who would see and hear, the redemption of humanity.

This night, unlike any other night, reminds us of the collective hope, peace, joy, and love revealed to us, to all who would see and hear the abiding presence of God.

“Long lay the world in sin and error pining”

We yearn deeply (pine) for a better tomorrow and the Good News of the Gospel is that in and through Jesus, God’s only begotten Son, that far-off hope becomes reality.

“A thrill of hope, the weary world rejoices. For yonder breaks a new glorious morn.”

As we bring this year 2020 to a close, reminded of the “tragic picture of our world literally wallering in our need”<sup>1</sup>, might we also be reminded of the hope, peace, joy, and love that our redeeming God offers this very night and in fact every night past, and every night to come.

And yes, the glorious morn of tomorrow reminds us of the breaking in of a new day, of a new life begun, and in a new life to be lived in and through our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

The old life is gone, and the new life is begun. That has been, that is, and that will be forever the Good News of the Gospel.

Merry Christmas

**Dr. Jeff Beebe**

## **Thank You To Our 2020 Contributors**

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