

## **2nd Sunday in Advent, December 5**

### ***Scripture Reading: Numbers 6:22-26***

*"The Lord bless and keep you;  
The Lord make his face to shine upon you, and be gracious to you;  
The Lord lift up His countenance upon you and give you peace."*

### **PEACE IS SUCH A GIFT**

**A**s we climb into these verses, it becomes apparent how much our Lord wants to calm our very soul. No wonder Numbers 6:22-26 has been used at the end of worship services, both Jewish and Christian, for thousands of years!

The blessing and "keeping" of each of us by an all-knowing, all-powerful God is such a comforting thought. As a husband, father, and grandfather it assures me that He is always present, "keeping" not only me, but all those I love and cherish.

When the dark times come, as they surely will, He is always there to comfort and guide us. My shortcomings are numerous; but, as I have found, my Lord continues to graciously work with me... like a parent working with a child who has brought home a bad report card. Like that child, I am still a work in progress.

As Christmas approaches, may we all embrace the peace that God so desperately wants to give us. May we do all we can to pass that peace to others.

**Fred Blackmon**

## ***Monday, December 6***

***Scripture Reading: Psalm 85***

### **GOD WILL GIVE US PEACE**

**P**salm 85 has been described as a prayer for people in crisis. That surely describes MY life for the past year and a half and more, living through this time of plague, COVID-19. I have lost people I know to the pandemic. I have suffered the loss of socialization and companionship with family and friends, as have most of us.

Yet, God calls us to Him, and he promises he will set things right. In Joel 2:25, God says, ***“I will restore the years the locusts (or the plague) have eaten.”*** That is a promise from a loving God, and a promise that brought me to tears when I was going through one of the most difficult chapters of my life.

Psalm 85 says God will give us peace. That means not only the absence of conflict but also wellness and wholeness. He offers salvation, which also means healing. To be saved literally means to be healed... physically, emotionally, and spiritually.

***“Steadfast love and faithfulness will meet; righteousness and peace will kiss each other,”*** Psalm 85 proclaims.

Restoration. Salvation. Healing. Peace... being made well and whole, strong and steady. How wonderful God is!

**Patricia Andrews**

***Tuesday, December 7***

***Scripture Reading: Luke 1:67-79***

## **LISTEN AND LET GO**

**T**he first chapter of Luke tells about the peace that Zachariah found after going through a rather strange ordeal. He was visited by Gabriel, the same angel who visited Mary, and was told that his elderly wife, Elizabeth, would soon have a child. Zachariah did what a lot of us would do in those circumstances; he doubted that Gabriel was telling the truth and challenged what he was saying. As punishment, Zachariah lost the ability to speak until after his son was born.

In my Bible, verses 67-79 have a subtitle that labels them as “Zachariah’s Song.” He has his voice back and is both praising God and asking Him to keep him and his people safe from harm. His mood is much like ours when things finally make sense and are working out.

I can recall several times during my police career when I was forced to make split-second life-threatening decisions. I felt that God intervened and spoke to me on those occasions and probably saved my life. How often in life we forget that if we let go and let God intervene, life will be so much easier.

Like Zachariah, I am blessed to have a son who makes me proud and brings me much happiness. He has also given me two wonderful grandsons. I am praying to pass the knowledge of salvation on to them.

Christmas is a time for reflection; and although I am not as prolific with words as Zachariah, I am very happy with my life. Sometimes I do as he did and forget to listen, but I know that God is gracious and forgiving.

**Paul Freed**

## **Wednesday, December 8**

### ***Reading: Lyrics to "It Came Upon a Midnight Clear"***

*"The world in solemn stillness lay"* (Edmund Sears)

#### **TO HEAR THE ANGELS SING**

I really like this Christmas carol. It was new to me and I don't remember ever singing, hearing, or listening to it before. It is very peaceful. It feels like a song that is perfect to listen to.....

in a church,  
in candle light,  
on Christmas Eve,  
when everyone is silent,  
when it is dark outside, and  
when the whole world just seems to be listening.

The first lyric that stands out is, *"From angels bending near the Earth to touch their harps of gold."*

When I was little, I thought that heaven was right above the clouds. So when it says, *"bending near the Earth."* I think of thick, fluffy clouds and angels.

I also thought about the lyric, *"The world in solemn stillness lay to hear the angels sing."*

When you are moving around a lot, you don't really hear the surrounding white noise. You might hear people talking or the TV, but not the noise of the room itself. You have to be still so that you'll hear the air conditioner, the hum of a fan, the tick of a clock, the dog breathing, papers rustling, or even something from another room.

I enjoyed the peacefulness of this song. It reminds me of doves, the symbols of peace. Merry Christmas!

**Lauren LaPides**

## **Thursday, December 9**

*Scripture Reading: Psalm 17:6-7*

*"I call upon you, for you will answer me, O God. Incline your ear to me, hear my words. Wondrously show your steadfast love, O Savior of those who seek refuge from their adversaries."*

### **HE IS OUR REFUGE**

**P**salm 17 is not one that I would typically choose for an Advent reflection. Where's the hope and peace and joy and love here? At first look, it only appears to be David's prayer regarding his enemies and his need to be rescued from them. David is calling out to God for God to save him from his enemies.

Oh... but there it is... it is not about David, and it is not about David's enemies. It is about GOD. David is crying out... not to the people around him, not to his enemies or his friends or those in assumed power. David is crying out to GOD. It is a heartfelt cry of great confidence in the One to whom he speaks. The One and only One who can come to his rescue. His focus, his cry, his hope is in the God who has shown him steadfast love over and over again... and who David knows will show his steadfast love again.

What a great reminder to us! How easy it is to lose our hope and peace and joy and love in times of confusion and difficulty... when our focus and our search for solutions is too much on this world.

Only when we cry out to God... only when we remember the steadfast love that God has shown us, and will surely show again, will we find the peace we long for. The peace that cannot be destroyed by our enemies within or without. He is truly our refuge and peace in the midst of the storms!

**Donna McClellan**

## **Friday, December 10**

### ***Scripture Reading: John 14:27***

*"I am leaving you with a gift – peace of mind and heart. And the peace I give is a gift the world cannot give. So don't be troubled or afraid."*

### **NO WORRIES**

**T**oday's Advent theme is Peace, and the scripture text is one with which we are all familiar. We pass the peace every Sunday at church service. I am drawn to the last sentence: *"So don't be troubled or afraid."*

Imagine never worrying about anything. It seems impossible, as we all have many worries. My way of dealing with worries is to do as Paul says in Philippians 4:6:

*"Don't worry about anything; instead pray about everything."*

I have a short prayer I say at these moments: "Father, my anxieties, emotions, and fears can be overwhelming and controlling. Thank you for being compassionate and gracious and helping me with them."

Jesus has given us a wonderful gift: peace of mind and heart. We can have that peace now by turning our worries over to Him. Do you want to worry less? Whenever you start to worry, stop and pray, and place your worries in His hands. This is what I do, and it brings me peace.

May the peace of the Lord be with you always.

**John Heidel**

## **Saturday, December 11**

### ***Scripture Reading: Philippians 4:5-7***

***“Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.”*** (verses 6-7)

### **GO TO THE THRONE**

**T**his Christmas Day will mark two decades since we lost our baby son. When I was pregnant with him twenty years ago watching the World Trade Center Towers fall, I wondered what kind of world I was bringing him into. As it happened, he didn't come into this world but went straight to our Heavenly Father.

In this time of COVID-19 loss, confusion, and despair, there are many things to be anxious about. I know this scripture talks to many of us. As a person who tends to get anxious often, this tells me what I need to do. Simple really.

We need to rejoice, be gentle, remind ourselves that God is near, not be anxious, but instead, pray, petition, and present our requests to God with thanksgiving. Then we will receive the peace, real peace that only comes from God. This peace is different. This peace, in Christ, will guard our hearts and our minds.

In other words, as soon as we feel anxious, we should not run to others; if we want peace, we should pray and bring our concern to the Lord. We should go to the throne and not to the phone!

This scripture reminds me of part of a familiar hymn:

***O what peace we often forfeit,  
O what needless pain we bear,  
All because we do not carry,  
Everything to God in Prayer!***

***(“What a Friend We Have in Jesus,” by J. Scriven)***

**Elaine Bodger**