


the pier



REST

From CHAOS to CALM

Advent Devotional | 2017

Introduction

The volunteers at Common Ground wanted to do something really special for you, during this Christmas Season. We wanted to share with you, what we feel is the ultimate gift. Being able to prepare our hearts to celebrate Christmas and what it's true meaning is to each of us. Instead of getting caught up in the hustle and bustle, the expectations and even the sadness. Lets together, take time each day and take in the simple, but most precious message. Let's rest in this season and the promises that are available to each of us. We wish you a Merry Christmas!

Love

Pier Christian Church, Common Ground

25 Front Ave

Open Monday - Friday 10-12:30

lunch served at 11

Join us Christmas Eve 6:00PM

Brockville Arts Centre 235 King St W.

Christmas Day Breakfast

@ 10:00, 25 Front Ave

REST Advent Devotional

Week 1 - Hope
Week 2 - Joy
Week 3 - Peace
Week 4 - Love

Week 1 -Hope

Hebrews 10:23

(The Voice)

Let us hold strong to the confession of our HOPE, never wavering, since the One who promised it to us is faithful.

Hope Definition

1. a feeling of expectation and desire for a certain thing to happen.
2. a feeling of trust.

Advent Devotional 2017 *Day 1 -HOPE*

Preparing for Advent

We are now in a season of the church year called Advent. At this time of year most of us would be thinking of Christmas approaching, and we would be making all our preparations for this special time. However, the four Sundays before Christmas are called Advent, meaning Coming or Arrival, which is referring to the arrival of Jesus on Christmas Day.

The Advent Sundays have special names too, like Hope, Love, Joy and Peace. These words show us just what Jesus wants for us. He wants us to prepare our hearts ahead of time before we celebrate Christmas. He will be with us every step of the way as this poem says there's a wonderful peace in just knowing

That **GOD** never leaves us alone,
And whether we feel he **IS** with us or not,
He loves us and calls us His own.
His word is our hope and **OUR** comfort,
A **REFUGE** when life brings our way
Those times we need wisdom **AND** guidance
And **STRENGTH** to sustain us each day.

Poem written by Emily Matthews

As we go into the Advent season, this time of preparing for celebrating Christmas do you feel hope? Are you able to hold strong to the HOPE that comes with the birth of Jesus and His promise for each of us?

Advent Devotional 2017 *Day 2 - HOPE*

There is Hope

For too many years I was lost and fearful. I was an only child from a very dysfunctional family. I was often afraid to open the door, because I never knew what I would find. Have you ever felt like that? When we grow up with people who do not know what love looks like, we do learn something....what love does not look like. When I got dropped off to my Aunt, she would always welcome me. She even drove hundreds of miles to rescue me when I needed it. One day she said "this thing that goes on with your mom and dad...it has nothing to do with you. They were making bad choices long before you came into the world. You have more common sense in your little finger than they do between their ears. You can choose to do better...choose how you will do life". Those words changed my perception of myself. I could choose. My aunt had Godly wisdom and between her and my Granny, I was covered in prayer. I did learn that God made us with the ability to make choices. The best choice I have made in my 71 years is to invite Jesus into my heart as my savior. What choices are you making today based on how you have been treated and what you believe about yourself? I have to ask you, have you been told that you have a Savior? Jesus Christ stands knocking at the door of your heart and wants you to invite Him in. God loves everything about you. You are one of a kind. He says in the Bible you are wonderfully made. God sent Jesus, His one and only son, to save you and set you free.

Advent Devotional 2017 *Day 2 - HOPE* Cont'd

There is Hope - Cont'd

My prayer for you is that this CHRISTmas you will choose to celebrate who you are and allow God, through his precious Holy Spirit, to fill you to overflowing with His love. Will you make that choice?

Acts 4:12

Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to mankind by which we must be saved.

Advent Devotional 2017 *Day 3 -HOPE*

Living Hope

1 Peter 1:3-6

Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! In his great mercy he has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, and into an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade. This inheritance is kept in heaven for you, who through faith are shielded by God's power until the coming of the salvation that is ready to be revealed in the last time. In all this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while you may have had to suffer grief in all kinds of trials.

Through Christ, His death and resurrection we have a living hope. A strong, durable hope, so amidst all difficulties as Christians we have reasons to rejoice. All the evil in the world is due to man's sin but the good is from God's mercy. His resurrection tells us that God the Father sacrificed Jesus life to free us, and He is victorious over death!

Today what is one difficulty that you need to choose God's hope as opposed to your solution?

Prayer-

Lord Jesus, thank you for the hope that you offer each of us. Today I am choosing to rest in your hope in this difficult situation. I am trusting in You and your outcome and I am choosing to rest in your hope today. Amen

Advent Devotional 2017 *Day 4 -HOPE*

A Hope That Will Not Fade

Jeremiah 9: 11-13

For I know the plans I have for you," declares the LORD, "plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future. Then you will call on me and come and pray to me, and I will listen to you. You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart.

Hope is when we look forward toward something in expectation. This may be for material things like a new car, a vacation or more money. This kind of hope is never satisfying because eventually the car wears out, the vacation comes and goes, and the money disappears with higher taxes. Various life circumstances cause people to experience hopelessness. Life looks like a long dark tunnel going nowhere.

The hope that God's Word talks about is to look forward to a spirit filled hope, in God's promises for us. This hope is based on God's truth. Find your hope restored in Jesus. He promises hope that will not fade away. He lights that dark tunnel.

Believe in Jesus. Jesus has promised that if we believe in Him, he will prepare a room in Heaven for us where there is no more sorrow or tears. Get to know Jesus. In him is your hope and purpose for living. Our Saviour and friend Jesus Christ is our constant source of hope.

The above verse states a promise, but it also tells us what we can do. Underline the promises, circle the part that is the action done by you. Hope is not just done with our mind and heart, but HOPE is active. Seeking and finding Jesus with all our heart.

Advent Devotional 2017 *Day 5- Hope*

What is your Hope built on?

Psalms 147:11

but the Lord takes pleasure in those who fear him, in those who hope in his steadfast love.

What is your hope in this Christmas? I remember one Christmas my hope was in getting the ultimate gift, an engagement ring. This was a few years ago and looking back I do believe that year my hope was planted in getting "the ring" . I thought it was going to change everything! Have you ever put your hope into something thinking it was going to tilt your life in a whole new direction? That once this happened your life would be set and would start to go in a better direction you ? Once I got the ring everything did change but the feeling that I thought would come, of satisfaction, of peace, of solving all the details that were out of place, well that didn't change, as a matter of fact it even made for more restlessness and turmoil.

In my life I can say there has only been one thing that I have put my Hope in that has brought different results. Results of feeling satisfied even while circumstances around me were not the most peaceful or calm. The Hope in the Lord's steadfast love. The hope that there is something greater and bigger than me. A God that loves me, for who I am and that He takes pleasure in me. The Hope that there is a place being prepared for me in heaven because I have accepted Christ as Lord of my life.

Today is your hope built on something that is fleeting? Or the one thing that is substantial, the only Rock to build on?

Today talk about your hope and where your hope lies with others.

Week 2 - Joy

1 Peter 1:8

(The Voice)

Although you haven't seen Jesus, you still love Him. Although you don't yet see Him, you believe in Him and celebrate with JOY that is glorious and beyond words.

Joy Definition

1. a feeling of great pleasure and happiness
2. rejoice

Advent Devotional 2017 *Day 1 JOY*

A Christmas to Remember!

Many years ago in December when my children were young, Christmas once again was getting closer and closer. This year was somewhat different, however, as we were not celebrating the day the same way, that we had for many years before that. It was just the four of us and to be quite frank, I was feeling somewhat melancholy and out of sorts. I did not like the busy-ness or the commercial feeling of the season at all.

The church we were attending, had the opportunity along with some others from our community, to serve a Christmas dinner in a closed up store front, in our downtown area. The planning began and I offered to make dessert for our guests.

The night came and I remember transporting all the desserts in my car to the back of this store. It was very dark and as I came in the back door I heard lots of hustle and bustle. It was pretty close quarters but when I walked into the room where we were serving the dinner; Oh what a wonderful sight! It was a small room but all these folks, young and old were there, having a wonderful time enjoying the food and each other's company. As I began to hand out the desserts my heart leapt with JOY, as I was greeted with smiles and well wishes. When I got home later that evening and shared my story with my family with tears in my eyes, we all agreed that I had indeed experienced the true meaning of Christmas!

What could you do this Christmas season to spread joy to others?

Luke 2:10-12 Amplified Bible (AMP)

But the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid; for behold, I bring you good news of great joy which will be for all the people. For this day in the city of David there has been born for you a Savior, who is Christ the Lord .

Advent Devotional 2017 *Day 2 JOY

The Gift of Joy

Happiness is an emotion that can disappear quickly. Joy is a choice. Joy is trusting, when you want to doubt. When we went on 3rd world mission trips, the joy of Christian congregations dominated anything you would see in North America. Everyone was happy to be alive and spent lots of time and effort praising God.

In the Lord's prayer we ask God to take care of us no matter what happens. The emerging nations people are not afraid to ask for this and they have faith, that it will happen. In North America we can choose to embrace Joy rather than feeling resentment, anger or fear.

In North America many things that are joyful are materialistic. Our feelings of joy are connected to temporary things. If we continue to follow this path we will always be chasing Joy.

It's not the kind of Joy the Bible describes: (**Peter 1:3-6**)

He has allowed us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance that is imperishable, undefinable, and unfading, kept in heaven for you.....In this you rejoice, though for a little while you have been grieved by various trials.

Finding Joy in tough times is difficult, yet the Bible acknowledges joy in the midst of suffering. We must be able to shift our concentration from present day events and focus on what is in store for us later. If we do this then we will experience joy no matter what challenges we face in life. Real joy is rooted in God and Godlike activity. He has worked in people's lives in the past, is working in people's lives presently and he has promised us a better tomorrow. Joy is about setting priority on future benefits as we live through temporary trials.

In summary may we say, as the apostle Paul: I have learned in whatever situation I am to be content. Let's be happy like our third world brothers and sisters, eliminate North American focus on materialistic temporary happiness.

Advent Devotional 2017 *Day 3 - JOY*

Something to be Joyful about!!

One thing that I would like to share about myself is that I love to sing. Now, I don't sing solos or duets, or even in small groups. I like to sing in choirs, wherein many people come together to make beautiful music.

Recently I was told that when Beethoven wrote his amazing Joyful We Adore Thee, he wrote it in a key that forced the sopranos to strain their voices to hit the high notes. This was done to exemplify the idea of humans straining to worship God in all of his glory.

The good news is that we do not have to strain to reach God. At Christmas time, we celebrate God's gift to us in the form of his Son, Jesus Christ. Christ's life and subsequent death, allows us the freedom to have an open relationship with God.

John 3:16

This is how much God loved the world: He gave his Son, his one and only Son. And this is why: so that no one need be destroyed; by believing in him, anyone can have a whole and lasting life. (Message)

Now that is truly something to be joyful about!

Take some time today and celebrate with great Joy, what the verse says above, that God loved the world (each of us) that he gave his Son and if we believe we can have a lasting life!!

Prayer

Heavenly Father, thank you that I have something to be joyful about today, no matter what I go through today. Thank you for the opportunity today to have an open relationship with You. Amen

Advent Devotional 2017 *Day 4 -JOY*

Am I Experiencing Real JOY?

It has rained a lot this year, dull dark days that leave us longing for sunshine and blue skies. Some of my favorite weather days are those ridiculously bright ones when the air feels fresh and clean and the sky is a brilliant blue. The sun makes me want to hang laundry and wash windows and just go outside and soak it in. Temporarily that weather fills me with a momentary joy that improves my mood and makes me feel content. I think the sun does that to a person. Makes us happy after long stretches of dull days. Gives us energy. That brightness produces joy, but it is short lived if it depends only on the weather.

There is however, a more permanent joy that is always available to us. That joy is ours for the asking. God has not promised us a perfect life with everything smoothly in place, but He has promised us that if we trust Him in all we do, He will give us joy, even in hard times.

John 15:11

"I've told you these things for a purpose: that my joy might be your joy, and your joy wholly mature."

Come and draw a little closer to God. Read the Bible a little more. Pray a little more. Rest in God's love. Feel the joy God gives so freely. Whatever happens, we have a reason to be joyful. We have a loving heavenly Father who gives us good gifts. We have a Savior who loved us enough to die for us. We have a comforting Holy Spirit who lives inside us and helps us in our daily journey to become more like Christ. If we believe these truths and trust them to be the focus in our lives, we will experience joy that is always the undercurrent even when times get tough.

Advent Devotional 2017 *Day 4 - JOY* Cont'd

Am I Experiencing Real Joy? Cont'd

Here are some verses that talk about Joy that we each have access to everyday!! Pick one or more of the verses today and really think if you are experiencing JOY in the way God intended for us? The verse you pick continue to read the verse throughout the day.

Psalms 63:5-7 My soul will be satisfied and my mouth will praise you with joyful lips, when I remember you upon my bed, and meditate on you in the watches of the night; for you have been my help, and in the shadow of your wings I will sing for joy.

1 Peter 1:8-9 Though you have not seen him, you love him. Though you do not now see him, you believe in him and rejoice with joy that is inexpressible and filled with glory, obtaining the outcome of your faith, the salvation of your soul.

Galatians 5:22,23 But the fruit of the Spirit is love, JOY, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self control, against such things there is no law.

James 1:2 Consider it all JOY my brethren, when you encounter various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith produces endurance, and let endurance have its perfect result, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing.

Advent Devotional 2017 *Day 5 - JOY

This Great Joy

My husband and I like to start our day reading the Bible together and talking about what we have read and how we can apply God's message to our lives. We are now reading a short book called "Philippians". It is actually a letter written by Paul an Apostle of Jesus Christ to the Christians in Philippi, while he was in prison.

It is a letter of "Joy"! So then what is Joy? Is it being happy? Paul says it is much more than that. Happiness is based on our emotions, our happenings, and it is temporary. It can be that warm fuzzy feeling we experience on a nice sunny day, or seeing our favourite TV program, or eating a great meal, or coming in from the cold to a cozy warm place.

Joy on the other hand, is a gift given to us by the Holy Spirit. **(Gal. 5:22)** For the Christian it is a condition of the heart, and lasts forever.

Sounds wonderful! How do I experience and keep this gift?

Paul says that Joy is in knowing what our Saviour Jesus Christ did for us. He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to death on a cross so that our joy may be made complete. When we know Jesus personally.

Our Joy will become greater by taking time to be with Him, reading His Word, experiencing His presence, His nearness, His love in our lives.

(Phil. 1:9) Joy makes a difference in how we live out our Christian life. The way we love others. Paul's words: "consider others better than ourselves," seeing others the way God sees them, as beautiful. The more Jesus increases in our lives, the more we decrease in our selfish ways. The more we experience the power of His resurrection in our lives, the more we become like Him! I love that in my senior years, God still isn't finished with me. **"Rejoice in the Lord always, I will say again, Rejoice"!** **Phil. 4:4.** Paul says this to the Philippians and to us because rejoicing in all circumstances changes our negative attitude to one of thankfulness. This doesn't mean we are thankful for the difficulties that have been brought upon us, but thankful that we can take our pain, our hurts, our circumstances, to our loving God in prayer. To our God who will listen, and His Peace will come to guard our hearts. So then, we don't have to worry or be anxious about anything. **(Phil. 4:6)**

This Great Joy Cont'd

I have experienced painful situations in my life, and by taking them to God in Faith and Trust, the way I view my circumstances have changed for my good and to His glory!

We do live in a crazy mixed up broken world where we are bombarded with anxiety, just by turning on our TV. This can be a trap for our minds and heart. We can become fixated on all that is happening around us. We must overcome this trap by keeping our minds on whatever is true, noble, right, pure, lovely, admirable, praiseworthy and excellent .

(Phil.4:8) THINK about these things and he the God of Peace will be with us. Paul learned to totally depend on Christ and lived a life content with all circumstances that came at him. He knew that he could do everything God asked him to do in God's power, grace and strength. **(Phil:4:13)** This is for us too. Come and experience this Joy! Come and experience more of this Joy! Joy born of a virgin.

Joy with us, working in us and through us as we obediently surrender our lives to Him.

And the greatest news of all is that our greatest Joy is still to come. Some day we will meet Jesus Christ face to face and He will take us to be with Him forever.

There will be no words to describe this Joy!!

Are there areas in your life where you are being robbed of more Joy?

In reading Paul's letter to the Philippians, do you find comfort and encouragement in any particular passage? **(Philippians 4)**

I have asked myself this hard question and I will give it out to you as well. Do I keep my mind fixed on Godly thoughts or do I allow Joy stealers (Criticism, gossip, complaining, judgment, holding onto the past with an unforgiving heart) to come into my life? By doing this do I rob others of their Joy?

Week 3 - Peace

Romans 14:19

(AMP)

So then, let us pursue (with enthusiasm) the things which make for PEACE and the building up of one another (things which lead to spiritual growth).

Peace Definition

1. freedom from disturbance; quiet and tranquility.
2. freedom from or the cessation of war or violence.

Advent Devotional 2017 *Day 1 - PEACE*

Peace That Elusive Thing

Peace That Elusive Thing that we all crave in our lives,. The desire that the things of this world cannot deliver. Oh yes wealth, health, power and influence promise peace yet fear, anxiety and insecurity seem to rule our lives. It seems they are out in front of every decision we make. Peace does not have to be fleeting or unattainable. If peace means the opposite of fear, anxiety and insecurity we need it desperately, and we need it now.

The one whose name is Prince of Peace (**Isaiah 9:6**) and God of Peace (**Hebrews 13:20-21**). He is the one who will guide our feet into the path of Peace (**Luke 1:79**). His name is Jesus. He spoke these words to his followers during troubling times. "Do not let your hearts be troubled. You believe in God, believe in me." (**John 14:1**)

John 14:27

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

Let this season of remembering the birth of the Prince of Peace be the one where we ask the God of Peace to bring rest and peace into our troubled hearts thru Jesus Christ our Lord!

Are you allowing your heart to be troubled today or are we afraid as Christmas approaches? Let's choose Peace today!

Advent Devotional 2017 *Day 2 - PEACE*

Personal Inventory

Christmas time, can be anything but full of peace! It can be a time of chaos and go, go, go! I have to go here and there, I have to get this and that, I need to be here on this date and there on that date. We are doing Christmas dinner here on this date and there on that day and twice on that day!! On top of that there are always family dynamics to deal with. Past hurts, past history, that can make it less than peaceful at our get togethers. Peace isn't the word used to describe Christmas and yet as part of the Advent - preparing for the celebration of Jesus coming, peace is one of the ways we are to prepare. Also peace is all through the Bible. We are called to be the peace, to pursue the peace, to choose peace.

I don't know about you, but I desire to feel peace, especially as I prepare my heart to celebrate Christmas, the arrival of Jesus! I don't want to get caught up in the hustle and bustle, of what Christmas has become.

Romans 14:19 AMP

So then, let us pursue (with enthusiasm) the things which make for PEACE and the building up of one another (things which lead to spiritual growth).

Today we can look at our lives as we approach the holiday and take a personal inventory. Am I choosing things in my life that make peace? What am I focusing on? (Tasks?, expectations?, family drama?) Or am I focusing on pursuing with enthusiasm things which make for peace? Building up one another?

Heavenly Father, thank you that you provide an opportunity for me to walk in peace, I am choosing today to walk in your peace that you offer me. I surrender the things that are not making up for peace in my life today. (name the things that came up in your personal inventory) Amen

Advent Devotional 2017 *Day 3- PEACE*

His Peace, our Victory

As we jumped out of the bus and headed to the hospital to share God's love, it was not hard to notice the sunny warm peaceful skies around us. But inside I was feeling anything but peaceful, my heart pounded with anxiety, my stomach churned, I knew I was in over my head. You see that day in Merida, Venezuela we were supposed to be visiting an orphanage. You know cute little kids we could play around with and feel sorry for. The government changed our plans, we were cleared only to visit a hospital, not just any hospital, a hospital where anyone going in, would not be leaving. You see the people were sent there to die.

How would I deal with sharing with people who were in such difficult circumstances. I was becoming overwhelmed with guilt for my inadequacies. Suddenly, I felt a hand on my shoulder, our leader whispered, "I know how you are feeling, we all feel the same way." We all stopped and prayed to be strengthened and filled with God's power before we opened those doors to so much suffering.

That day the Spirit of the Living God went before us and displayed in us the Peace of God that transcends all understanding. This He did to his Glory. We all marvelled at His power that day. Won't you ask the Prince of Peace, to be your Peace, in your time of difficulty? I pray you that you will!!!

Philippians 4:6-7

Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

Advent Devotional 2017 *Day 4- PEACE*

Peace On Earth to All Man

Who doesn't want peace in their lives? If we were to ask ten people if they would want peace throughout the world, I am sure the ten would all say yes to peace. The pursuit of peace is universal in its endorsement. Gandhi declared "Whenever you are confronted with an opponent, conquer him/her with love". Mohammad says, "That man is a Muslim who never hurts anyone by word or deed". The Buddha affirms, "Hate is conquered by love". Jesus' birth was announced as bringing "peace on earth to all man".

While the goal is agreed upon, how do we find relational harmony and peace? Does peace come through compromise? We all have to give up a little if we are going to have peace. You have heard of the term "win-win", is that working in our world today? Why do we still have wars, family feuds, and relational issues? Peace does not come through compromise.

Peace comes through a relationship with Jesus Christ. Peace comes with accountability to Jesus. One must ask Jesus to come into their heart to know peace that only God can give. **(Revelation 3:20)** says "Here I am! I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door (your heart), I will go in and eat with him, and he with me."

Jesus' birth was announced in **(Luke 2:13)** by angels singing "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace to men on whom his favor rests." If you want peace in your life this Christmas - seek and accept Jesus. His peace gives us strong relationships with each other, peace in the middle of life issues, and grants us a good night's sleep - sleep in the arms of Jesus the Psalmist says. Peace also takes away fears, and His peace gives assurance of where we will spend eternity **(1 John 5:11-13)**. True and lasting peace only comes through Christ.

As we approach Christmas do you have fears that are overtaking your mind today? In the above writing it states that God's peace is true and lasting and will take away fear. Name the fear and talk to God about it. Ask Him the Prince of Peace to take part in our daily life. We are not alone!

Advent Devotional 2017 *Day 5- PEACE*

Practice Peace

Whenever we turn on the T.V. or pick up the newspaper today we see numerous wars and conflicts.

Isis vs. the world, Country vs Country, people vs the establishment, family splits, marriages coming apart. The very first family torn up was by a brother murdering his sibling. It seems that conflict is indeed in our DNA. Peace is elusive. Where do we find it?

Well it is available, Jesus at the beginning of his ministry said "come onto me all you who are weary and conflicted and I will give you rest." (Matt 11:28) Toward the end of his ministry he told his followers "Peace I leave with you, my peace I give to you, not as the world gives, do I give it to you. (John 14:27)

It has been said that if you take away the guns, they will use knives and if you take away their knives, they will use their fists and if you tie their hands behind their backs, they will curse with their mouths.

Peace however is NOT just the absence of conflict but rather the presence of LOVE (GOD). God is love (1 John 4:8). The ways of the world will never bring lasting peace, it may temporarily end conflict, but unless the heart of man undergoes a change and is "Born Again" born of the Spirit it will never experience peace. Lasting Peace can only be experienced by allowing the Prince of Peace to enter and rule in our hearts.

Heavenly Father, I praise you today that you are the only answer to peace, because you are love. Thank you God as you change my heart you bring peace into the equation because of who you are the Prince of Peace and your love. Amen

Week 3 - Love

Hosea 14:4, John 13:34

(MSG)

**God said of His children
"I will LOVE them lavishly"**

THEREFORE

"...LOVE one another. In the same way I loved you, you LOVE one another."

Love Definition

1. an intense feeling of deep affection.
2. a person or thing that one loves.

Advent Devotional 2017 *Day 1- LOVE*

What Love is this?

When I was in my last year at school - this was in Scotland - the seniors were asked to choose a passage of scripture and read it at the Morning Assembly. I chose the 4th chapter of John's First Epistle and it includes the following:

This is how God showed his love for us: God sent his only Son into the world so we might live through him. This is the kind of love we are talking about—not that we once upon a time loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as a sacrifice to clear away our sins and the damage they've done to our relationship with God.

I have chosen the same passage to be read at my funeral. It's all about God taking the first step, not waiting for me, and you, to somehow find him because he knows we would never get it right. So Christmas is all about God. We call this time Advent, which means Coming. When our time is up that is all that matters.

If this is the first time you have heard that God took the first step and was not waiting for you to somehow find him, how does that make you feel? To realize the God of this universe pursues you, yes you!!

Do you have a favorite passage from the Bible about love?

Advent Devotional 2017 *Day 2 - LOVE*

Love was born in a Manger

Luke 2:7 (ESV)

And she gave birth to her firstborn son and wrapped him in swaddling cloths and laid him in a manger, because there was no place for them in the inn.[a]

Lets go to Bethlehem to the stable. I stand in the corner and I watch. A baby is born, not just any baby, the Son of God, love in the flesh. His mom places Him in the manger. No pretty bed just a feeding trough. The King of Kings and the Lord of Lord's the one who came to save us from our sins. He wasn't born in a palace like other kings. The thing is, He was nothing like earthly kings. I watch Him, I look at Him and I am humbled because I know He has come not just for me, but for you.

He came to this place, this way so He could identify with us. He came to give us new life and show us, what real love is. What a gift!! It's not wrapped in gold paper with a pretty bow, but wrapped in His love and the cross. The gift of acceptance beyond our understanding. When I think of this I am so overwhelmed.

He offers a love so pure with no strings attached. He loves you and me just because. This season as you open your gifts and spend time with family, this isn't what it's all about, its about the greatest gift of all, **LOVE**. Love that was born in a stable just because He was thinking only of you.

1 Corinthians 13:13

So now faith, hope, and love abide, these three; but the greatest of these is love.

Today throughout the day focus on the truth that Jesus was born in a stable because the Love God has for you!!

Advent Devotional 2017 *Day 3-LOVE*

Love One Another

The Ten Commandments are God's ultimate rules to live by.

Jesus told his followers, "If you love me, you'll keep my commandments."

But there are two pitfalls to this. The first is, only Jesus is perfect enough to keep God's commandments. The second is, when we try to follow the 10 Commandments, we end up making the rules more important than people.

Jesus makes it simple by giving us the heart of the 10 Commandments.

John 13:34:

"A new command I give you, love one another as I have loved you, so you must love one another."

1 John 4:18

"There is no fear in love. But perfect love drives out fear, because fear has to do with punishment. The one who loves fear is not made perfect in love."

But how do we show this love? The Bible provides some examples.

Philippians 2:5 "In your relationship with one another, have the same mindset as Christ Jesus."

Ephesians 5:28 "Husbands ought to love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife, loves himself."

Romans 12:10 "Be devoted to one another in love. Honour one another above yourselves."

Psalm 36:10 "Continue to love those who know you, your righteousness to the upright in heart." But, if you just "love those who love you, what reward will you get?"

Matthew 5:44 "But I tell you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you."

Advent Devotional 2017 *Day 3-LOVE*

Love One Another Cont'd

Deuteronomy 10:19 "and you are to love those who are foreigners."

Romans 15:7 "Accept one another, then, just as Christ accepted you, in order to bring praise to God."

1 Peter 4:9 "Offer hospitality to one another without grumbling."

Ephesians 4:32 "Be kind and compassionate to one another. Forgiving each other, just as in Christ, God forgave you."

There are many more verses on how to love others in the bible. Pick a verse that speaks to you on how you need to love others in your life this Christmas.

Advent Devotional 2017 *Day 4-LOVE*

The Gift of LOVE

To express love is to give. There has been no greater gift of love than when God gave Jesus, our Saviour who died to forgive our sins. God gave - we received.

I had a love gift from God when my brother was born. I was sixteen years old with three sisters when we had another sibling born into our family. We were so excited when we found out we had a brother. He was born with down syndrome. We struggled through various emotions when we discovered our brother would have life long challenges.

We soon found out he was a love gift from God. Our brother taught us much about how to love. He was patient, so appreciative of everything done for him. He had a gentleness that showed, especially with babies and pets, and was so forgiving when offended.

He played hockey on the driveway with his nephews, learned to ride a bike and swim and when older worked at a workshop making buttons on a button machine (his favorite job).

When he was older and in a wheelchair in a nursing home, he was like a magnet, drawing other residents to his side, and as my nephew said he was the glue that helped our family stick together. We are so thankful he was sent to our family.

All of God's gifts are good, the greatest being Jesus.

James 1:17

"Every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of the heavenly lights, who does not change like shifting shadows"

What expectations do you have as Christmas approaches in a couple of days? Could you set aside your expectations and trust that you have or have an opportunity to experience the greatest gift of all!! A relationship with Jesus.

Advent Devotional 2017 *Day 5-LOVE*

The Love of a Father

My Dad passed away when I was 13 years of age. In those 13 years he showed me his love every day. He was our strength and our financial provider. Our family didn't have a lot of money , but we had Love all around us. We attended church every Sunday and on Sunday afternoons we visited grandparents or had picnic lunches along the River. I felt special, I felt loved, and cared for and I felt protected. I was never alone or lonely. Then dad got sick and died . I didn't understand why God let him die. My world was broken. There was just my Mom and 3 young girls to look after on her own. I had to step up and be responsible while Mom went off to work. Why me Lord??

My Mom was a very strong woman and she just picked herself up got a job and maintained a home still full of Love for her 3 young daughters. She never complained . Mom said what the Lord takes away he gives back in other ways. I've learned over the years the Lord doesn't take us away; he has provided a better and wonderful place for us to live in eternity. We are all welcomed into Gods house if we are willing to follow Him , our Lord and Savior, and show our Love for Him.

It took me a lot of years from the age of 13 to understand how great the Love of God our Father in Heaven is. His Love never goes away. He longs for us, to Love him back. He smiles and is proud of us when we show Him that same Love and when we show Love to others.

Revelations 3:20

Behold I stand at the door and knock

Advent Devotional 2017 *Day 5-LOVE* Cont'd

The Love of a Father Cont'd

Dear friends I urge you to open up your door.

Let the Love of your heavenly father come into your life. You will never know a greater Love than God the Father , Jesus His Son and HIS Holy Spirit, so that you can truly feel his love inside you grow and grow.

John 15:12

This is my commandment to you, to LOVE one another as I have LOVED you

1John 4:7-8

Dear Friends, let us LOVE one another, for Love comes from God. Everyone who Loves has been born of God and Knows God . Whoever does not LOVE does not know God, because God is LOVE.

1John 4:19

We LOVE because he first loved us.

What has God shown you over the last 4 weeks?

Merry Christmas, may you REST in His Love, Peace, Joy and Hope during the Holiday! By choosing and putting into practice all that has been said and that we have discovered over the last 4 weeks, we are trusting that this year will be different!

Lord, make me an instrument of your peace:
where there is hatred, let me sow love;
where there is injury, pardon;
where there is doubt, faith;
where there is despair, hope;
where there is darkness, light;
where there is sadness, joy.

O divine Master, grant that I may not so much seek
to be consoled as to console,
to be understood as to understand,
to be loved as to love.
For it is in giving that we receive,
it is in pardoning that we are pardoned,
and it is in dying that we are born to eternal life.
Amen.

Prayer of St Francis Assisi

Reflection