

Advent Daily Devotional 2013

Santiago Community Church
Santiago, Chile

“Advent Daily Devotional 2013” was written by those who attend Santiago Community Church in Santiago, Chile. Advent is the beginning of the Church Year for most churches in the Western tradition. It begins on the fourth Sunday before Christmas Day, which is the Sunday nearest November 30, and ends on December 24. If Christmas Eve is a Sunday, it is counted as the fourth Sunday of Advent, with Christmas Eve proper beginning at sundown.

The word **Advent** means "coming" or "arrival." The focus of the entire season is the celebration of the birth of Jesus the Christ in his First Advent, and the anticipation of the return of Christ the King in his Second Advent. Thus, Advent is far more than simply marking a 2,000 year old event in history. It is celebrating a truth about God, the revelation of God in Christ whereby all of creation might be reconciled to God. That is a process in which we now participate, and the consummation of which we anticipate.

In this double focus on past and future, Advent also symbolizes the spiritual journey of individuals and a congregation, as they affirm that Christ has come, that He is present in the world today, and that He will come again in power. That acknowledgment provides a basis for Kingdom ethics, for holy living arising from a profound sense that we live "between the times" and are called to be faithful stewards of what is entrusted to us as God's people. So, as the church celebrates God's inbreaking into history in the Incarnation, and anticipates a future consummation to that history for which "all creation is groaning awaiting its redemption," it also confesses its own responsibility as a people commissioned to "love the Lord your God with all your heart" and to "love your neighbor as yourself." (Taken from “Advent” by Dennis Bratcher).

The Daily Bible Readings provided here are adapted from the *Book of Common Prayer*, used in the Anglican and Episcopal traditions for daily church services. They are organized on a two-year cycle and can provide a basis for daily devotional reading and reflection. Many Lutherans, Methodists, Presbyterians and other mainline Protestants also use the Daily Lectionary.

Many thanks go to the writers and artists who contributed to this devotional. This diverse group of men and women, boys and girls come from many different countries and diverse faith perspectives. They are united, however, in their love of God and commitment to grow as disciples of Jesus Christ through the power of the Holy Spirit. We invite you to pray for each writer as you use this devotional.

Sunday, December 1

1 Thessalonians 5: 1-11, (NIV)

"Now, brothers, about times and dates we do not need to write to you, for you know very well that the day of The Lord will come like a thief in the night. While people are saying, "Peace and safety," destruction will come on them suddenly, as labor pains on a pregnant woman, and they will not escape. But you, brothers, are not in darkness so that this day should surprise you like a thief. You are all sons of the light and sons of the day. We do not belong to the night or to the darkness. So then, let us not be like others, who are asleep, but let us be alert and self-controlled. For those who sleep, sleep at night, and those who get drunk, get drunk at night. But since we belong to the day, let us be self-controlled, putting on faith and love as a breastplate, and the hope of salvation as a helmet. For God did not appoint us to suffer wrath but to receive salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ. He died for us so that, whether we are awake or asleep, we may live together with him. Therefore encourage one another and build each other up, just as in fact you are doing."

I walked along the sandy bottom of Lake Spofford, as the sun sank lower in the blue sky. The warm water rose higher on my body as I walked away from the shore. Barely a ripple shown on the surface of the water. Ladies from Bible study were on our final summer outing on the lake. As I joined those in the water, I looked up at the fluffy white clouds and said, "Some day The Lord will appear in those clouds." We silently contemplated the joyful promise of His return. Just as baby Jesus came into the world more than two millennia ago, fulfilling centuries old prophesy, He will gather us to reign with Him for eternity. I wonder if the Old Testament prophets became impatient for his first appearance, or if they wondered if He would ever come. We know that many rejected Him after His first advent, and today others wonder when or if He will return. As I anticipate celebrating His birth later this month, I look forward to His second coming, when he will create a new heaven and a new earth. Do you?

Katherine Anderson

Retired Professional Nurse, mother of Caroline (San Diego) & Jennifer (Atlanta),
USA

Monday, December 2

Psalms 1 & 2 Peter 1:1-11, (NIV)

"Blessed is the man who does not walk in the counsel of the wicked or stand in the way of sinners or sit in the seat of mockers. But his delight is in the law of the Lord and on his law he meditates day and nights. He is like a tree planted by streams of water, which yields fruit in season and whose leaf does not wither. Whatever he does prospers."
(Psalm 1:1-3)

"His divine power has given us everything we need for life and godliness through our knowledge of him who called us by his own glory and goodness. Through these he has given us his very great and precious promises, so that through them you may participate in the divine nature and escape the corruption in the world caused by evil desires." (2 Peter 1:3-4)

Earlier this year in Chile's northern desert, I visited an oasis where a vast orchard of pear, quince, and pomegranate trees grew all around the stream. Despite a flood, these trees continue to yield fruit – their leaves have not withered. Just a few kilometers away from the water, these trees could not sprout, grow or give fruit; were they to root there, they would be a totally different life form, lacking fruit and foliage. As God provides water in the oasis so the trees may grow and nourish others with their fruit, so He has provided His word to us, to give us life. With its refreshment, we grow and flourish, and go on to nurture others with the fruits of the spirit. His word is "everything we need for life and godliness" and when we meditate on it and take delight in it, we are rooting ourselves in the oasis, that we may participate in the divine nature, and share the sweetness of a life with God.

-Janet Hamilton, youth group leader and investment banker

Tuesday, December 3

2 Peter 1:12-21 (NIV)

¹² So I will always remind you of these things, even though you know them and are firmly established in the truth you now have. ¹³ I think it is right to refresh your memory as long as I live in the tent of this body, ¹⁴ because I know that I will soon put it aside, as our Lord Jesus Christ has made clear to me. ¹⁵ And I will make every effort to see that after my departure you will always be able to remember these things. ¹⁶ For we did not follow cleverly devised stories when we told you about the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ in power, but we were eyewitnesses of his majesty. ¹⁷ He received honor and glory from God the Father when the voice came to him from the Majestic Glory, saying, “This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased.”

¹⁸ We ourselves heard this voice that came from heaven when we were with him on the sacred mountain. ¹⁹ We also have the prophetic message as something completely reliable, and you will do well to pay attention to it, as to a light shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts. ²⁰ Above all, you must understand that no prophecy of Scripture came about by the prophet’s own interpretation of things. ²¹ For prophecy never had its origin in the human will, but prophets, though human, spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.

I remember being told in my late teens by Peter Lee, a South African bishop, that most Christian ‘teaching’ we hear will not involve us learning something new, but being reminded of something we already know. And that we need that reminding, drip by drip, to keep on remembering. When I first became a Christian, as a young teenager, there seemed to be a giddy abundance of fresh teaching. As time went by, alarm began to creep in that the new information seemed to be drying up. Peter Lee’s statement provided welcome reassurance. I suspect that the lovely bishop Peter had read the second book of Peter.

As Christmas comes round, once again, let’s put off any fatigue bred by familiarity and welcome the opportunity to be reminded. We lived in Arica for five years where there weren’t many churches to choose from. The one we were part of didn’t really get very enthused about Christmas, let alone Advent, and through the virtual absence of these celebrations at Church in my life in those years, I understood better their significance for me.

This is such a splendid period to reflect on, and nourish our hearts and souls with the message that the Lord Jesus came in humility, yet in power and majesty. Let’s allow

ourselves, and encourage others too, to be surprised by the astonishing events of the Christmas story, and to worship and rejoice in our Father anew because He so loved the world that he sent us His one and only Son, as He had long promised He would.

Anne Westmacott

English, Married to a Chilean. Has two children.



Wednesday, December 4

Matthew 21:23-32 (NIV)

Seeing & Believing

The chapter of Matthew 21 begins with Jesus's Triumphal Entry into Jerusalem. The first advent is nearing completion. Jesus is teaching in the temple and is confronted by the chief priests and elders who are questioning His authority. They sought to trap Him but Jesus turned their own words against them. They were probably not competent to judge His authority. He used the moment to open their eyes. He gave them a chance to *see and believe*. Jesus then goes on to tell a story of a father of two sons who tells them both to go work in the vineyard. Both sons were defiant. Both were disrespectful to their father. Both took the road frequently traveled. The actions of the first son were superior to his words. The second son had the right words but failed in obedience. Jesus asked those religious leaders which son did what his father wanted. He is teaching that what matters is living for God and not lip service. He then goes on to tell them that tax collectors and prostitutes would be entering the kingdom of heaven before them. The outcasts *saw and believed* in the authority of Jesus.

Jesus' authority is His love, His peace, His goodness and righteousness. In reflecting over the last year I have *seen and believed* His authority in this place:

- sharing lives at the get-acquainted dinners
- feasting on His word at David's Tuesday Bible study
- unity at the general meeting
- laughter with new friends
- chillin' in the Holy Spirit at the church retreat
- seeing the heart of Cross Connections sitting around our dining room table
- the cycle of the grapevine that covers the patio
- and last Christmas we shared Christmas dinner with many from SCC and with those just passing through. It was the story of the loaves and fishes repeated and we were able to somehow fit 25+ in our small apartment. It was *seeing and believing* in His glory that day and it became one of our best Christmas' ever.

At this time of year we celebrate the birth of Jesus. We celebrate His advent. We celebrate *seeing and believing* the authority – the love of Christ.

Billy Schraub, USA

Thursday, December 5

2 Peter 3:11-18

"... what kind of people ought you to be? You ought to live holy and godly lives as you look forward to the day of God and speed its coming." (2 Peter 3: 11-12)

Twenty months ago today, my wise eighty-nine year old father said his last words to me. I cannot remember what he said. Would I have paid more attention if I had known they were to be his last words? And his last words to me? It has been hard for me to get used to not having his wisdom on which to rely, his insight on which to call, his foresight on which to depend. I try to remember his words of advice, to live the life I know he would want me to live, to be the daughter that would make him proud. I believe that, in the same way, our heavenly Father wants and expects us to live the lives he has prepared for us, once we accept Christ as our Saviour. We celebrate Christmas every year because it is a way to remind ourselves of the amazing gift of new life in Christ.

"Therefore, dear friends, since you have been forewarned, be on your guard so that you may not be carried away by the error of the lawless and fall from your secure position." (2 Peter 3: 17)

God's Word has persevered for thousands of years. I wonder if we listen.

Tessa Too-Kong

Born in Guyana. Daughter, sister, mother, grandmother.
Economist, editor, poet, writer, translator.

Friday, December 6

Psalm 16

“Keep me safe oh God, for you are my refuge.”

Sometimes in life, everyone needs to find a refuge in someone or something. My parents have always told me that they will be here for me to run to. That has always worked to comfort me in times of distress, since they were always there for me when we would move around the world together. They have been my backup plan, my safety net for me to fall back on, but what happens when they aren't able to be there, what do I fall back on then?

That question has always been in the back of my mind and whenever I read Psalm 16 verse 1, I have a sudden calmness in my life. I know that I don't have to worry because although someday my earthly family will not be there for me because they are in heaven I have my heavenly father's arms, which will always be open and ready to catch me.

This devotional isn't meant to make you miss your parents or suddenly realize how much you love and admire them (if it did then great). This was intended to make you more certain that our holy father has and always will be our safe haven from the turmoil of this world. No matter what's happening in your life, whatever troubles you are facing, God is always there to catch you. All you have to do is know and trust him. After reading this, I'm hoping that the first half is already done.

Janelle Lewis

Daughter, sister, student, athlete, and child of God.

Saturday, December 7

Psalm 20

Psalm 20 begins and ends with the word “answer”; *“May the Lord answer you when you are in distress”... “Answer us when we call”*. The heart-warming psalm implies the importance of praying regularly to God with the conviction that he will hear us.

I was never taught to pray as a child by my parents. I come from a progressive family that upholds typical Christian values, but is not religious, so prayer was definitely not on the menu when I was growing up. Being the done thing in my parents' social circles, I was baptised a Catholic, and my grandmother was my godmother. She sent me a rosary when I was a young girl; I thought it was a necklace!

Although I was later sent to Catholic and Protestant schools, I do not remember being taught that prayer could be used as a tool to communicate with God on a daily basis, not just at church. My Christian spiritual awakening came as an adult. It has been a gradual process.

Having not grown up with the habit of praying, I am not used to asking for help outside my immediate family when I am in distress. I very rarely start my quest for the solution by praying to God or Jesus. I have no problem with praying for other people, though. I guess part of the problem lies in the fact that I feel terribly unworthy of God's love, of his attention. It's hard to acknowledge that God actually wants me to talk to him, that he loves and cares for me. Just as I am. I guess that must happen to quite a few people. If we have a hard time loving ourselves just as we are, it seems inconceivable that any other being would do so. But we are told in the Bible that God thinks we are worth it. God thinks that we are worth saving. To prove that fact he sent his son, Jesus, to guide us on our path to becoming the best versions of ourselves to love and serve the Lord, to be there for each other.

We've just got to remember that our loving God and dear Jesus are only a prayer away.

Tania Jadresic (Samsing): Family & friends & English Teaching & Drama Club & cat (& film & book & music & &... (!))Seeker of Jesus and fan of SCC.Couch Potato / Swimmer / Flat Ground Walker.Strong supporter of The “Vamos Que Se Puede” Movement ☺

Sunday, December 8

Luke 1: 57-66 (KJV)

It's the end of the second trimester at school and I have lots of projects and tests due. I'm getting less sleep and worrying on my grades and what I have to do.

Even though I now realize how simple and irrelevant that was, I was really stressed. One afternoon while talking to my Aunt, she gave me some advice; she said, "it's not all in your hands, it's in God's hands and everything will work out fine". It was good advice but hard to follow.

I have realized I was being like Zacharias, when he was told that he was going to have a son he didn't believe it, just like I didn't believe I was going to finish all my tests in time. And just like Zacharias I received my punishment as the week went on I was getting tired and started to feel really bad. I realized I couldn't do it all and it was time to trust in God just like Zacharias did.

It wasn't about leaving it all to God; it was about taking his hand. Just like when I was little and I held my parents hands when I was scared and in trouble; it was time to take God's hand and give him part of my problems to work together.

Just like Luke 1 verse 66 says: "*and the hand of the Lord was with him*"; we must remember the hand of the Lord is there for us.

Antonia Bignotti

15 years old

Daughter and sister; Loves to read, cook and help others

Monday, December 9

Matthew 22:23-33

When I read this passage in Matthew, I have to wonder just how long it took the Sadducees to even come up with this question. Can't you just see them standing around adding more personal intent as they built on Moses' teaching? I understand that they were trying to trick Jesus and catch Him in some sort of quandary as they did not believe in resurrection.

But when I listen carefully to their question, I hear echoes of concern, challenge, crisis and a hint of gospel and victory.

The Sadducees were versed in the OT teaching of a coming Messiah. I wonder if they knew of this Jesus' birth some thirty years earlier in Bethlehem, if they had heard the shepherd's story of the baby in the manger.

Jesus tells them they do not know the power of God, this God of the Living. This God of old, the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob –this God came between humanity's need with His abundant grace and sent His son Jesus, to be all the Sadducees ever needed. Jesus quieted them with His teaching. I wonder if there were some that questioned that day if Advent had been in their presence.

Molly Schraub/USA

Tuesday, December 10

Matthew 22:34-46

The time we prepare for Christmas is ideal for pondering upon our understanding (often cloudy) of Christ's identity for each of us, the meaning of the Trinity and the faith that can make them real in our daily lives. The disciple Matthew /Levi is a Jew who believes that in Jesus, the Messiah has come. He writes with the authority of an educated, on-the-spot observer, for the benefit of his fellow Jews.

Jesus answers the Pharisees' third question thus: *"To 'love the Lord your God with all your heart and all your soul and all your might', this is the greatest commandment. And the second is like it: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.' All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two Commandments."* He is quoting the Pentateuch, and his answer, far from surprising his interrogators, would confirm for them his reputation as a thoroughly well-versed religious Rabbi or teacher.

But the questions he puts to them aren't so easily answered. First, he asks them *"What do you think about the Messiah? Whose son is he?"* They answer, *"The son of David."* And Jesus says, *"How is it then that David, speaking by the Spirit, calls him 'Lord'?If David calls him 'Lord', how can he be his son?"*

None could respond, nor did they dare ask him any more questions!

Through the Bible, one can suddenly experience the feeling that Jesus is asking us a direct question: "Who am I?" Who do you think I am?" And Advent is a very good opportunity for pondering one's answer.

Penelope Knuth is a native of New York and the mother of Georgina and Antony Rossi. She teaches at Campus Oriente of Catholic University of Chile

Wednesday, December 11

Amos 8:1-14 (NIV)

There's always so much excitement that surrounds Christmas – the wonderful treats that appear, numerous concerts of beautiful music available, the delight of the children over their presents – that the passages in today's reading just don't seem to fit. Psalm 38 talks about sickness and suffering, Amos about judgment on Israel and Revelation about erring Christians in Ephesus! Truly, there seems to be no connection at all with the warmth and goodwill we associate with Christmas,... until we look at Amos.

Through Amos, God warns the people who “trample the needy”, those people who only think of gain for themselves, that He will not stand for this. The day is coming when the tables will be turned and the helpless, the suffering, the hopeless will be blessed.

And that day came on Christmas, the day when Jesus arrived on the earth and uprooted the existing systems of religion, politics and society to form a new system. This system protects the weak, cares for the helpless and comes alongside the hopeless.

At a time of year that can be disappointing when things aren't as beautiful and perfect as we had expected them to be, Jesus' birth gives us a reason to celebrate. His coming to earth brought the new system, a kingdom, in which those who aren't smart or perfect or beautiful, those who simply flounder, thrive. That kingdom is here and is coming and will be all that we hoped for.

Leah Sulser, Seattle, USA, Bibliophile

Thursday, December 12

**Psalm 37:1-8; Amos 9:1-10; Revelation 2:8-17;
Matthew 23:13-26 (NKJV)**

In 2010, I had an encounter with God that all at once changed my perception of who He is, and also who I can become as a follower of Jesus Christ. While attending a discipleship class, I was praying for God to reveal something to me about myself. I remember clearly that I received an impression of a specific passage in the Bible, Mark 7:6-7. I excitedly opened my Bible, confident that it would surely be something wonderful and encouraging. To my shock and sadness, these verses struck my heart and my pride. The God of the universe was calling me out, warning me of my hypocritical tendencies.

I had a choice: Would I accept God's warning and, with His help, begin to transform my attitude and actions, or would I deny His sovereign diagnosis and continue to follow my own ways? I chose the former. So, by choosing to accept God's admonition, I received a heightened desire to want to be held accountable by Him.

Just as we see God rightfully correcting the churches mentioned in Revelation 2, He will do the same for us as individuals. I don't believe God has a critical nature, rather He lovingly convicts our hearts of wrongdoing and redirects our focus back to Himself. In the passages above, God admonishes His people to live holy lives (Amos 9), to be transformed by the truth (Matt. 23) and to trust, commit and rest in Him (Psalm 37). This is your challenge - will you take it?

Dana Fought, "A work in progress!"

Friday, December 13

Psalm 31, Verse 10 (NIV)

For the Director of Music, A song of David

My life is consumed by anguish and my years by groaning; my strength fails because of my affliction, and my bones grow weak.

Well, the psalmist couldn't be much plainer: he's getting old and creaky and all he does is moan. Yet the psalm is entitled a song of David. Surely he was singing in a minor key? Because getting old isn't exactly fun. In my experience, some bits fall off; other bits wear out, then one day you start talking to yourself and, guess what, you sound just like David.

If I glance over my shoulder, I can just glimpse myself arriving in Santiago 20 years ago. I look quite young. I even speak fluently in whole sentences. I walk confidently, as if I can see where I'm going. That was then; this is now. Now, I put on my glasses and read the rest of the passage and there, in verses 14 & 15 he says:

But I trust in you, LORD; I say, "You are my God." My times are in your hands.

It's the last line that gives me pause, for I suspect David is referring to more than just the calendar, but to the time of his life. He's old. Period. The clock's not going to start spinning backward. So what does he do? He puts himself in God's hands and SINGS!

What a way to go: what a lesson in how to go.

Ellen Hawkins
Hiker, writer & dancer

Friday, December 14

Psalm 30: 4-5

“Sing praises to the LORD, O you his faithful ones, and give thanks to his holy name. For God’s anger is but for a moment; his favor is for a lifetime. Weeping may linger for the night, but joy comes with the morning.”

I have always been a church year person. Growing up I remember from a very young age that we would bring home children’s Advent booklet s from Sunday School and use them on Sunday evening to have our own family devotional. All of us children would gather around the well-worn nativity scene and the Advent wreath, with purple candles slightly askew. We would take turns reading the scripture, then one of us would get to light the candle for that week, saying “I light this candle on the first Sunday in Advent to remind us of the coming of the Christ Child.” That’s how I remember it, anyway.

Flash forward to 2013 and I have developed a new appreciation for the church year. I still love the candles of Advent, the joy of Christmas, the somberness of Lent, the songs of Easter and the colors of Pentecost, but it’s the cycle of those events that connects with my soul. In the midst of my hope and expectations, I know that joy will be coming. Even in my time of despair, I know that God’s joy will soon wash over me again. As the Psalmist says, “Weeping may linger for the night, but joy comes with the morning.” Nothing stays the same – weeping turns to joy, repentance turns to forgiveness, regret turns rebirth. Nothing stays the same – except for God. Thank God for that! *“Sing praises to the LORD, O you his faithful ones, and give thanks to his holy name.”*

Anonymous

Sunday, December 15

Amos 9:11-15

“In that day “I will restore David’s fallen shelter— I will repair its broken walls and restore its ruins— and will rebuild it as it used to be, so that they may possess the remnant of Edom and all the nations that bear my name,” declares the LORD, who will do these things. “The days are coming,” declares the LORD, “when the reaper will be overtaken by the plowman and the planter by the one treading grapes. New wine will drip from the mountains and flow from all the hills, and I will bring my people Israel back from exile. “They will rebuild the ruined cities and live in them. They will plant vineyards and drink their wine; they will make gardens and eat their fruit. I will plant Israel in their own land, never again to be uprooted from the land I have given them,” says the LORD your God.

In this passage from Amos, we see that God is encouraging his people. He is telling them that He is on their side and has not forsaken them. Although the mighty walls of David’s shelter have crumbled and fallen they will soon be rebuilt so that the people of Israel can go back to the land promised to them.

There are times in all of our lives where we feel like the exiled Israelites, thinking that God has deserted us and that we have no power to overcome our oppressors; be they people, physical or immaterial obstacles. For many, this time is towards the end of each year, feeling as if we have not fulfilled anything. That there were too many promises that weren’t kept, that there were occasions where the outcome was not ideal, but nothing was done to change it. We feel as if we have fallen short of what God had planned for us, that He watched us crumble through the year. Yet like those exiled in Babylon, God never deserted us, never deemed us unworthy of His time and effort. God is and will always be right beside us guiding us through life. We might not like what we have to do but if we let Him lead, He can begin to ‘restore our ruins’. We don’t have to wait for New Years to arrive to gain a fresh start; all we have to do is ask God for help. God said “The days are coming”, the days to make right all that was wrong, to have a fresh start, a second chance. Those days are now.

As we approach this special day in the calendar of the church, the birth of our savior Jesus Christ, we are reminded that when God makes a promise it does not apply only to the people of times long ago, but it continues through the generations and applies to everyone who believes in Him. We can be assured that if we trust God and ask Him to forgive and rebuild us after we stumble and fall, we will “never again be uprooted”.

Jonathan Lewis,
Student at Nido de Aguilas, Brother to Janelle & son to Arina & Dale Lewis

Monday, December 16

Matthew 24: 44-50

So you also must be ready, because the Son of Man will come at an hour when you do not expect him. "Who then is the faithful and wise servant, whom the master has put in charge of the servants in his household to give them their food at the proper time? It will be good for that servant whose master finds him doing so when he returns. I tell you the truth, he will put him in charge of all his possessions. But suppose that servant is wicked and says to himself, 'My master is staying away a long time,' and he then begins to beat his fellow servants and to eat and drink with drunkards. The master of that servant will come on a day when he does not expect him and at an hour he is not aware of.

The master in the parable has given his servants certain instructions: to watch over his household in his absence. One of them obeys to the best of his ability but the other one, taking advantage of his master's absence, shirks his duty and lives only for himself.

So what kind of servant am I? Am I doing what the Lord requires of me until He comes again? Or do I do my own thing, thinking that if Jesus hasn't returned in all this time, he's probably not coming now? I wish I could say I was always the first servant, but the truth is I'm often the second.

What does it mean for us to take care of the Lord's household until his return? What does the Lord require of us? We can bog ourselves down with good works from morning till night but the truth is none of us is fully ready. But the prophet Micah puts it simply:

He has shown you, O mortal, what is good.

And what does the LORD require of you?

To act justly and to love mercy

and to walk humbly^[a] with your God. Micah 6: 8

I will try and remember this as I go about my day and with each person I meet.

Pamela Yorston

Tuesday, December 17

Revelation 3: 14 – 22

Jesus came and is coming back ... but Jesus wants to be with us NOW. The passage in Revelation concludes: *"Here I am! I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in and eat with him, and he with me."* He's offering us a reciprocal relationship in the here and now.

My children have both recently started out on their professional careers and have reason to be proud of their achievements. However, in Revelation 3 Jesus is not impressed by the intellect and wealth of the Christians in Laodicea – he gives them this advice: *"I counsel you to buy from me gold refined in the fire, so you can become rich; and white clothes to wear, so you can cover your shameful nakedness; and salve to put on your eyes, so you can see."* Those whom he loves, he rebukes and disciplines. Yet he also invites us to *"be earnest, and repent"* and enjoy an eternal relationship with him.

Whilst remembering Jesus' birth this Christmas and looking forward to his second coming, let us not fall into the category of being "lukewarm" Christians, but let us open the doors of our lives to him and allow him to be our guide.

Audrey Wilsdon

Born in England, married in Germany, mother in Germany and Chile, secretary by profession, called into God's family at the age of 12

Wednesday, December 18

Psalm 119:49-72 and John 3:16-21

Words leapt out of the verses. Remember, comfort, promise, teach ending with the verse 72 *"The law from your mouth is more precious to me than thousands of pieces of silver and gold."* What a heritage we have been given and what a privilege to have the revelation of the New Testament available to us. A friend of mine recently said we are coming up to the "silly" time of year. I know what she meant, all the fuss over Christmas presents and retail commeralization which is worldwide it seems. It takes away from the real meaning of what we are celebrating.

However, we DO have the promises, the comfort the teachings all year round just if we take the time to read and "digest" it, hopefully memorizing some of the verses which can pop into our heads at any given moment when we need it. Psalm 119 is basically about the "law" (God's teaching and instruction for life) and the individual - interspersed with frequent prayers. The psalm's focus on the truly happy life as one is deep-rooted in reverence for God.

One of the most well known verses of the Bible is the fullfilment of God's promise in 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."* That is the heart of the Gospel message, what more could we ask for..... That is the real meaning of the season.

Penny Reid.

Wife, mother, grandmother and lover of the outdoors.....

Thursday, December 19

Psalm 50 (NIV)

God is constantly reminding me that He is my God. Sometimes I forget it and wonder why things are not working out as I imagined. In other times, I feel so far away from Him that I think He might have forgotten about me. But I open my Bible and I'm reminded that no matter what I have done or how I feel, God is always here, right next to me.

Sometimes all I need to do is to stay silent and feel His presence. In this season of waiting, I'm trying to discover what God is doing in my life. Most days I don't know what to say or do. At other times, I even forget to pray or read my Bible but He puts something or someone in my way and I'm reminded of Him.

Andrés Herrera,
Chile, Seminary Student

Friday, December 20

Psalm 40; I Sam. 2:1b -10

As I read the above mentioned readings I felt the powerful touch of the Holy Spirit and my eyes filled with tears. I looked up at the pictures of my grandchildren. Right in the middle is “Angel”, now three months old. I call him “the miracle baby”, as I told David when I sent him the very first picture of my third grandson.

What is so special about this baby? Each day many boys are born in this world of tears. My daughter, Daniela, suffered deeply as she remained childless. Her frustration and sorrow were mine as well as her mother’s.

In I Samuel Hanna praises God Almighty, and says *“My heart rejoices in the Lord, in the Lord my horn is lifted high ...”*. Just like Hanna, my daughter rejoices: it was three years of waiting and we finally have this long expected “Angel” with us. Praise the Lord! I can now join in with the psalmist when he says: *“I waited patiently for the Lord, He turned to me and heard my cry”* (Psalm 40.1).

I thank you, Lord, for hearing and answering my prayers. Thank you, Lord, for being a loving God who can understand his feeble children.

Hector Barrientos

Proud grandfather of Martin, Sebastian and Angel

Nature lover.

Saturday, December 21

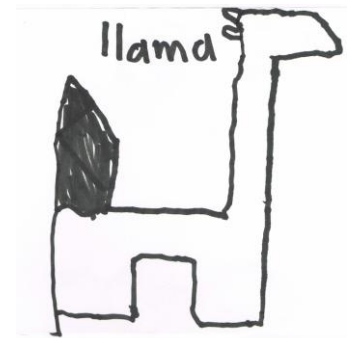
Titus 2:11-3:8 & Psalm 55

Devote yourself to Doing Good

In Paul’s letter to Titus we learn about Christian faith and the teaching to the people. Here we are reminded about doing Good; *“to be ready to do whatever is good, to slander no one, to be peaceable and considerate, and to show true humility toward men”*. As Christmas time comes closer and the streets of Santiago become busier and people become more stressed with end-of-year activities we are reminded by the Bible Reading about the kindness and love of God our savior. He appeared, he saved us, not because of righteous things we have done but because of his mercy. Sometimes we feel fear, we tremble, *“the destructive forces are at work in the City”* Psalm 55:11. But again we remember that God gave us his only son Jesus Christ so that we can cast our fears away. *“Cast your cares on the Lord and he will sustain you; he will never let the righteous fall”* Psalm 55:22. The bible makes many references to God’s people as God’s sheep.

These bible readings bring to our family the image of a Llama. The Llama is one of the most important domesticated South American animals. The Llama is a symbol of endurance and balanced action. We can learn many lessons from the Llama like:

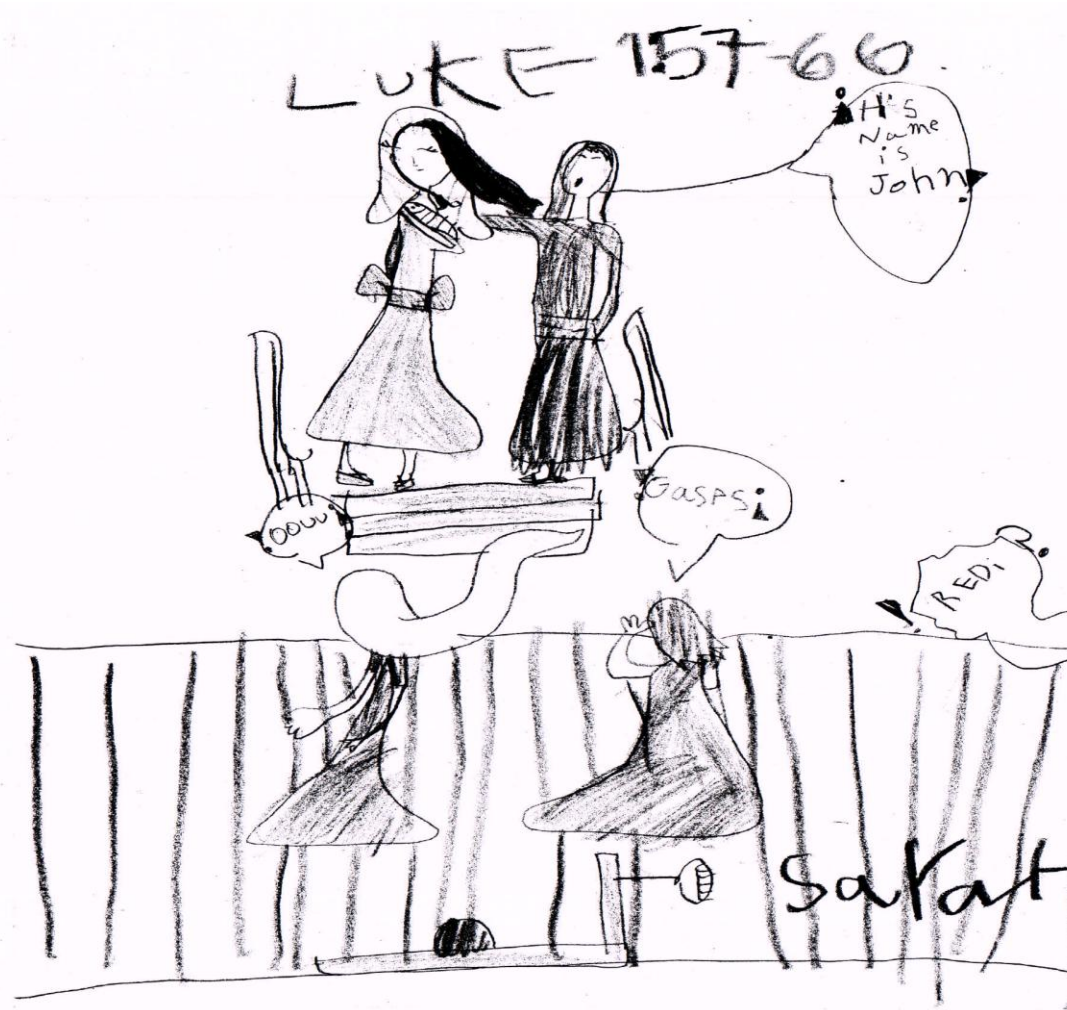
- Endurance under difficult situations
- Responsibility and hard work
- Balanced action that comes from perseverance toward a worthy goal



We learn from the reading in Titus 2 the importance of self-control and respect. *“Teach older men to be temperate, worthy or respect, self-controlled, and sound in faith in love and in endurance”*. We are motivated to always do good and to endure difficult situations like the Llama. During this time of year let us remember our duty as Christians and also be open to loving others, like God loves us and gave us the wonderful gift and birth of Jesus Christ. Christmas is a time to let love fill our hearts even if the world around us becomes hectic. We are encouraged to do good to others and to have balanced action.

Joel, Ophi, Fabio and Marco. The Araujo-Fox family have been members of SCC for 11 years. Joel and Ophi got married in the church and have been involved with the community ever since.

Sunday, December 22



Sarah Burgos

Monday, December 23

Gal. 3:15-22

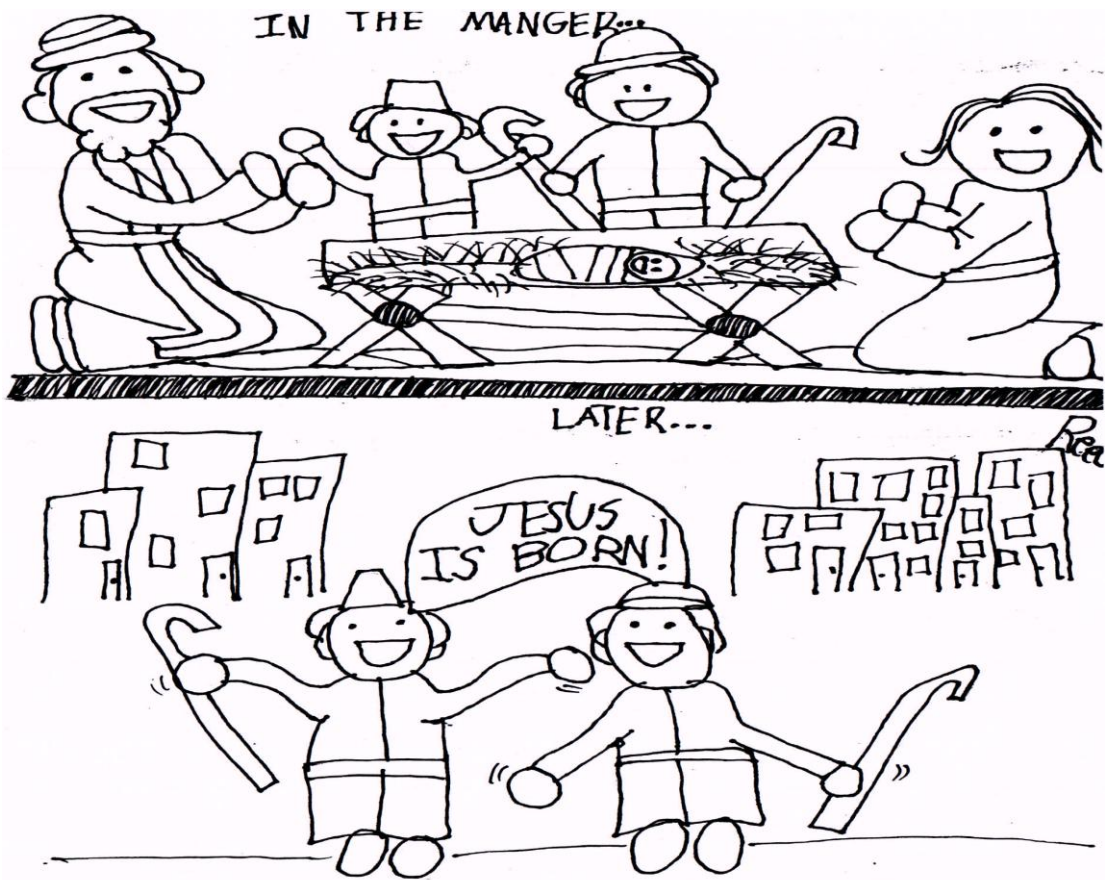
Gal 3:18 -- *For if inheritance is based on law, it is no longer based on a promise...*
Gal 3:22 -- *...so that the promise by faith in Jesus Christ might be given to those who believe.*

Helping with our Church's high school youth for the past few years, I am frequently reminded of the Byzantine system of rules that governed my own adolescence: Bed at 9:00 PM; 30 minutes of computer games; skip to the weather channel during controversial movie scenes; 5 fruits and veggies a day. The list goes on...

Yet, as I grew older, the guidelines slowly began to disappear, vanishing entirely when I went off to college. I expect the early Christian Jews had this same sensation as they looked back on God's earlier law and future promise, which had now become a reality. They'd lived for millennia following their own system of laws, the Torah, but then, within a few short years, it had been replaced.

For my first few weeks in college, I was overjoyed to be free from the plethora of strictures that had hounded me for my first 18 years. But, it didn't take long for me to realize that something had to fill that vacuum. Life was just plain easier before. I expect the 1st century Christian Jews sometimes longed for the good-ole days, when, "If you did 'a,' you could rectify it by doing 'b.'" The promise? Grace? That stuff is hard to understand, let alone practice. However, just as one of my rites of passage into adulthood was transitioning away from the laws of my parents, the early Church had to transition away from their codified rules of conduct into a system of faith, grace, and promise. It was hard for them. And it's hard for me too.

Keith August Jaenke



Reed Allen, age 8, and Raelin Allen, age 6.

Wednesday, December 25

Psalm 147:1-11 and Micah 4:1-5,5:2-4

Bethlehem. Why Bethlehem? What's so amazing about Bethlehem?

Just one thing - just one person, or no, two: David and David's greater Son, Jesus. Why is Jesus so special, and so precious to me?

Micah and the writer of Psalm 147 tell me who he is and what he does and promises to do, then and now, and it fills me with gratitude and praise.

He is: governor, ruler, judge and shepherd;
all-knowing and mighty;
limitlessly understanding,

He is NOT: concerned with externals;
impressed by self-reliance,
power and success.

He promises:

to give us new priorities;
to build up what has been destroyed in us;
to bring back those of us who have been exiled;
to heal our broken hearts;
to dress our wounds;
to hold us in our weakness;
to provide all we really need;
to give us such security so that no-one will make us afraid;
to teach us HIS ways, so that we can walk in his paths;
to BE OUR PEACE.



It sounds easy, but I know it isn't. I read here that what Jesus asks of us is just to put our HOPE in his unfailing love. There will be sadness and muddle until "she who is in labour gives birth" - until Jesus is truly born in me, in us and in our world.

Linda Craddock de Cobb: English. I love my family and friends, music, silence, teaching and watching the changing seasons.