

All
about
Jesus

ADVENT READINGS 2024

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All about Jesus



It is all about Jesus. It has always been about Jesus. We should always be about Jesus – hoping, loving, joyful and peaceful. It is easy to be caught up in the traditions, lighting the candles on Sundays through advent – ensuring that the lighting order is strictly followed – and enjoying the sense of place all these activities and traditions afford us. And yet our true sense of place is guaranteed by the very person whose coming we eagerly anticipate in this season. So, let's not be distracted; let's make it about Him!

He is our hope fulfilled and hope kept alive – the Saviour we expect from heaven. He is our joy, the sustaining strength of God that powers our daily living through His Spirit. He is the Father's love fully expressed, bringing the riches of God's mercy that has been lavished on us to make us His confident children who now enjoy and preach His peace.

Our brothers and sisters in the early church had this to say about Him:

Christ is the visible image of the invisible God. He existed before anything was created and is supreme over all creation, for through him God created everything in the heavenly realms and on earth. He made the things we can see and the things we can't see — such as thrones, kingdoms, rulers, and authorities in the unseen world. Everything was created through him and for him. He existed before anything else, and he holds all creation together. Christ is also the head of the church, which is his body. He is the beginning, supreme over all who rise from the dead. So he is first in everything. For God in all his fullness was pleased to live in Christ, and through him God reconciled everything to himself. He made peace with everything in heaven and on earth by means of Christ's blood on the cross. (Colossians 1:15-20 NLT)

This year the readings are organised into four weeks around the advent themes of hope, peace, joy and love - all fulfilled in Jesus Christ. There are five readings for each week of advent and space for your thoughts or notes. Please read, reflect and share.



Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! By his great mercy he gave us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.

1 Peter 1:3 (NET)

Week 1: Hope in Jesus Christ Alone

Reading One

Genesis 12:2-3

I will make you into a great nation, and I will bless you, and I will make your name great, so that you will exemplify divine blessing. 3 I will bless those who bless you, but the one who treats you lightly I must curse, and all the families of the earth will bless one another by your name.

Genesis 22:15-18 (ESV)

And the angel of the LORD called to Abraham a second time from heaven 16 and said, “By myself I have sworn, declares the LORD, because you have done this and have not withheld your son, your only son, 17 I will surely bless you, and I will surely multiply your offspring as the stars of heaven and as the sand that is on the seashore. And your offspring shall possess the gate of his enemies, 18 and in your offspring shall all the nations of the earth be blessed, because you have obeyed my voice.”

Acts 3:24-26

And all the prophets, from Samuel and those who followed him, have spoken about and announced these days. 25 You are the sons of the prophets and of the covenant that God made with your ancestors, saying to Abraham, ‘And in your descendants all the nations of the earth will be blessed.’ 26 God raised up his servant and sent him first to you, to bless you by turning each one of you from your iniquities.

Acts 13:32-33

And we proclaim to you the good news about the promise to our ancestors, 33 that this promise God has fulfilled to us, their children, by raising Jesus, as also it is written in the second psalm, 'You are my Son; today I have fathered you.'

Israel's hope lay in the promise that God made to their ancestors, starting with Abraham to make them into a great nation. God also promised Abraham that through his seed or descendant all nations of the earth will be blessed and bless themselves. In the New English Translation (NET), Genesis 22:18 is rendered as follows: "Because you have obeyed me, all the nations of the earth will pronounce blessings on one another using the name of your descendants." What do you think are the implications of this reading for us?

The promises to Abraham and the Jews, their expectation and hope, received their fullest expression in Jesus the Messiah. Through Jesus we have received this promise and now have the hope of eternal life. But it is not just for us to keep, we are also called to share this hope - pronounce God's blessings on others in the name of Jesus Christ, Abraham's seed (cf. Gal. 3:16).



Reading Two

Isaiah 7:12-14 (ESV)

But Ahaz said, “I will not ask, and I will not put the LORD to the test.” 13 And he said, “Hear then, O house of David! Is it too little for you to weary men, that you weary my God also? 14 Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign. Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel.

Matthew 1:18-25

Now the birth of Jesus Christ happened this way. While his mother Mary was engaged to Joseph, but before they came together, she was found to be pregnant through the Holy Spirit. 19 Because Joseph, her husband to be, was a righteous man, and because he did not want to disgrace her, he intended to divorce her privately. 20 When he had contemplated this, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, “Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary as your wife, because the child conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. 21 She will give birth to a son and you will name him Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins.” 22 This all happened so that what was spoken by the Lord through the prophet would be fulfilled: 23 “Look! The virgin will conceive and bear a son, and they will call him Emmanuel,” which means “God with us.” 24 When Joseph awoke from sleep he did what the angel of the Lord told him. He took his wife, 25 but did not have marital relations with her until she gave birth to a son, whom he named Jesus.

Biblical hope takes the form of waiting with a confident expectation rooted in the faithfulness and sovereignty of God. Hope in the OT is founded both on YHWH, the “hope of Israel” (Jer. 17:13), and on Israel’s religious memories in which YHWH makes covenants with Israel. In one of those covenants YHWH promised to dwell among his people. But Israel’s repeated sin destroyed both Israel’s right to remain in a place near YHWH’s presence and YHWH’s desire to dwell among the people (see Deut. 32). Hope is only rekindled on the basis of God’s mercy, forgiveness and faithfulness to his promises, even if the sign of that hope in a baby yet to be born might seem a small thing. Yet in this promise through Isaiah the name of that baby is given as Immanuel (“God with us”), indicating once again God’s desire to be with his people, rooting their identity and daily life in him.

A sunset over a body of water with two hands holding a glowing orb. The sun is low on the horizon, creating a warm orange and yellow glow. Two hands are visible, one on the left and one on the right, holding a glowing orb that is the letter 'H' of the word 'HOPE'. The word 'HOPE' is written in large, bold, dark letters, with the 'H' being the glowing orb. The background is a soft, out-of-focus sunset over water.

YOUR FAITH AND LOVE HAVE
ARISEN FROM THE

HOPE

LAI D UP FOR YOU IN HEAVEN,
WHICH YOU HAVE HEARD
ABOUT IN THE MESSAGE OF
TRUTH, THE GOSPEL.

COLOSSIANS 1:5 (NET)

Reading Three

John 1:1-14

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was fully God. 2 The Word was with God in the beginning. 3 All things were created by him, and apart from him not one thing was created that has been created. 4 In him was life, and the life was the light of mankind. 5 And the light shines on in the darkness, but the darkness has not mastered it. 6 A man came, sent from God, whose name was John. 7 He came as a witness to testify about the light, so that everyone might believe through him. 8 He himself was not the light, but he came to testify about the light. 9 The true light, who gives light to everyone, was coming into the world. 10 He was in the world, and the world was created by him, but the world did not recognise him. 11 He came to what was his own, but his own people did not receive him. 12 But to all who have received him - those who believe in his name - he has given the right to become God's children 13 - children not born by human parents or by human desire or a husband's decision, but by God. 14 Now the Word became flesh and took up residence among us. We saw his glory - the glory of the one and only, full of grace and truth, who came from the Father.

The Tabernacle was more than simply a site of worship. It was a piece of heaven on earth, meant to create a longing for and hope of heaven in the hearts of God's people – a desire to live in his presence forever. As God's glory entered the tabernacle, so Jesus has entered our world as God's glory and our eternal hope. Do you long to live in God's presence forever? Jesus is the answer!

Reading Four

Isaiah 35

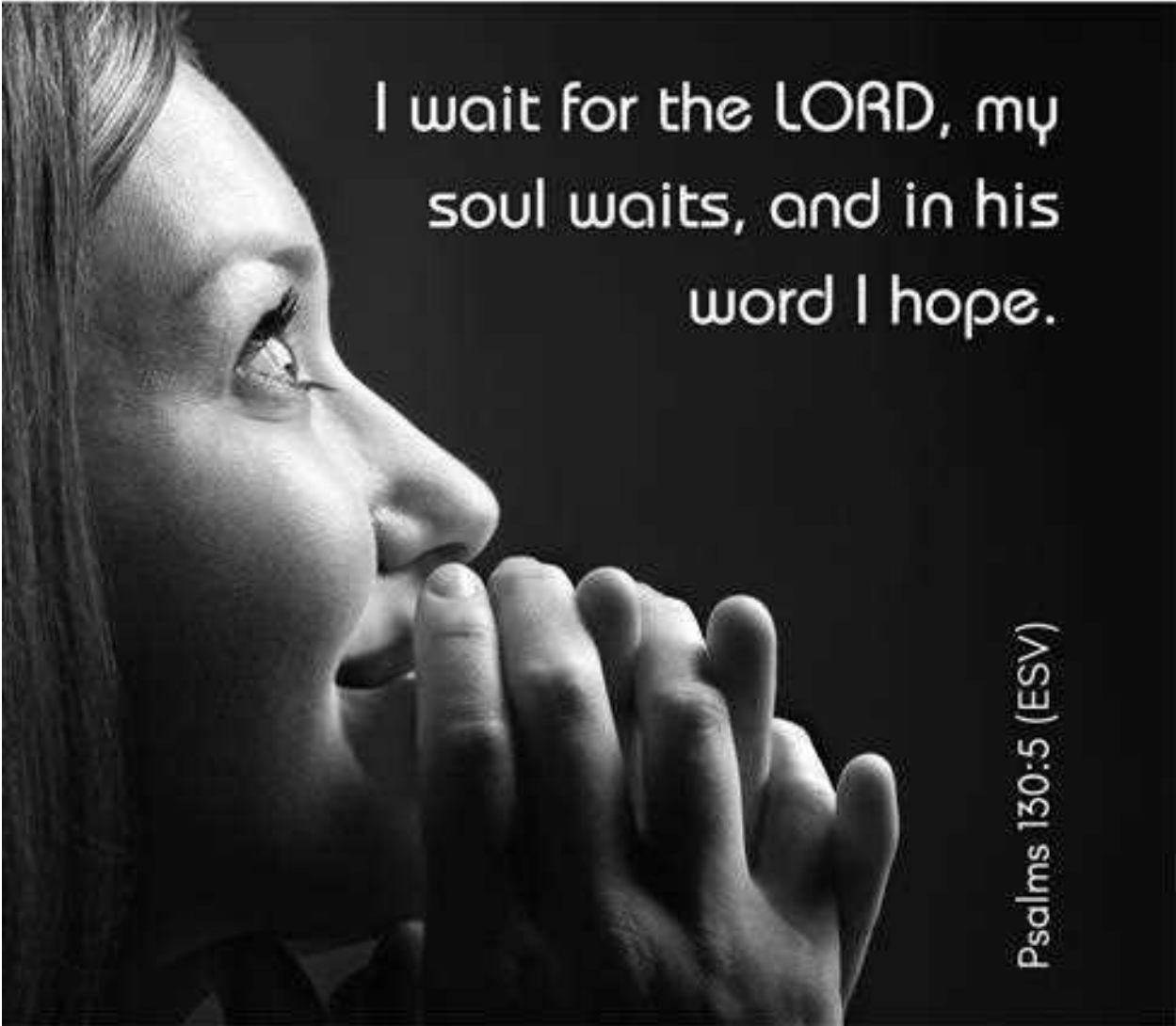
Let the desert and dry region be happy; let the wilderness rejoice and bloom like a lily! 2 Let it richly bloom; let it rejoice and shout with delight! It is given the grandeur of Lebanon, the splendour of Carmel and Sharon. They will see the grandeur of the LORD, the splendour of our God. 3 Strengthen the hands that have gone limp, steady the knees that shake! 4 Tell those who panic, "Be strong! Do not fear! Look, your God comes to avenge! With divine retribution he comes to deliver you." 5 Then blind eyes will open, deaf ears will hear. 6 Then the lame will leap like a deer, the mute tongue will shout for joy; for water will flow in the desert, streams in the wilderness. 7 The dry soil will become a pool of water, the parched ground springs of water. Where jackals once lived and sprawled out, grass, reeds, and papyrus will grow. 8 A thoroughfare will be there - it will be called the Way of Holiness. The unclean will not travel on it; it is reserved for those authorised to use it - fools will not stray into it. 9 No lions will be there, no ferocious wild animals will be on it - they will not be found there. Those delivered from bondage will travel on it, 10 those whom the LORD has ransomed will return that way. They will enter Zion with a happy shout. Unending joy will crown them, happiness and joy will overwhelm them; grief and suffering will disappear.

Matthew 11:2-6

Now when John heard in prison about the deeds Christ had done, he sent his disciples to ask a question: 3 "Are you the one who is to come, or should we look for another?"

4 Jesus answered them, “Go tell John what you hear and see: 5 The blind see, the lame walk, lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, and the poor have good news proclaimed to them. 6 Blessed is anyone who takes no offence at me.”

Hope, whether in the everyday use of the word or in the biblical sense, is noted to produce the courage and strength to endure the present or generate the ability to wait with certainty for future resolution or recovery. The absence of any hope can have devastating consequences – leading to a sense of being abandoned by God or people and a deep longing for life to end. Isaiah looks ahead with hope to see all of nature cheering at the brilliance of God. Jesus fulfils that hope by bringing healing to the diseased and make the 'feeble' strong. Jesus himself is the 'Way of Holiness.' In Jesus, those of us who once struggled along in the desert have a great hope that we can now share with everyone. Be prepared to speak words of hope to the world around you.



I wait for the LORD, my
soul waits, and in his
word I hope.

Psalms 130:5 (ESV)

Reading Five

Isaiah 40:28-31 (NIV)

Do you not know? Have you not heard? The LORD is the everlasting God, the Creator of the ends of the earth. He will not grow tired or weary, and his understanding no one can fathom. 29 He gives strength to the weary and increases the power of the weak. 30 Even youths grow tired and weary, and young men stumble and fall; 31 but those who hope in the LORD will renew their strength. They will soar on wings like eagles; they will run and not grow weary, they will walk and not be faint.

Hebrews 6:13-20

Now when God made his promise to Abraham, since he could swear by no one greater, he swore by himself, 14 saying, "Surely I will bless you greatly and multiply your descendants abundantly." 15 And so by persevering, Abraham inherited the promise. 16 For people swear by something greater than themselves, and the oath serves as a confirmation to end all dispute. 17 In the same way God wanted to demonstrate more clearly to the heirs of the promise that his purpose was unchangeable, and so he intervened with an oath, 18 so that we who have found refuge in him may find strong encouragement to hold fast to the hope set before us through two unchangeable things, since it is impossible for God to lie. 19 We have this hope as an anchor for the soul, sure and steadfast, which reaches inside behind the curtain, 20 where Jesus our forerunner entered on our behalf, since he became a priest forever in the order of Melchizedek.

Notes



CHRIST HIMSELF IS OUR PEACE.

Ephesians 2:14 (NCV)

Week 2: Jesus Christ, Our Peace

Reading One

Luke 2:4-14

So Joseph also went up from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to Judea, to the city of David called Bethlehem, because he was of the house and family line of David. 5 He went to be registered with Mary, who was promised in marriage to him, and who was expecting a child. 6 While they were there, the time came for her to deliver her child. 7 And she gave birth to her firstborn son and wrapped him in strips of cloth and laid him in a manger, because there was no place for them in the inn. 8 Now there were shepherds nearby living out in the field, keeping guard over their flock at night. 9 An angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were absolutely terrified. 10 But the angel said to them, “Do not be afraid! Listen carefully, for I proclaim to you good news that brings great joy to all the people: 11 Today your Savior is born in the city of David. He is Christ the Lord. 12 This will be a sign for you: You will find a baby wrapped in strips of cloth and lying in a manger.” 13 Suddenly a vast, heavenly army appeared with the angel, praising God and saying, 14 “Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace among people with whom he is pleased!”

At the birth of Jesus, God announced peace through the rejoicing angels. That peace was for the earth, and ensures God’s favour on all those who would be reconciled to him through Jesus. Peace and favour go together. Is that your experience?

Reading Two

Isaiah 42:1-4 (MSG)

Take a good look at my servant. I'm backing him to the hilt. He's the one I chose, and I couldn't be more pleased with him. I've bathed him with my Spirit, my life. He'll set everything right among the nations. He won't call attention to what he does with loud speeches or gaudy parades. He won't brush aside the bruised and the hurt and he won't disregard the small and insignificant, but he'll steadily and firmly set things right. He won't tire out and quit. He won't be stopped until he's finished his work—to set things right on earth. Far-flung ocean islands wait expectantly for his teaching.

Matthew 12:15-21 (MSG)

Jesus, knowing they were out to get him, moved on. A lot of people followed him, and he healed them all. He also cautioned them to keep it quiet, following guidelines set down by Isaiah: Look well at my handpicked servant; I love him so much, take such delight in him. I've placed my Spirit on him; he'll decree justice to the nations. But he won't yell, won't raise his voice; there'll be no commotion in the streets. He won't walk over anyone's feelings, won't push you into a corner. Before you know it, his justice will triumph; the mere sound of his name will signal hope, even among far-off unbelievers.

Injustice and broken lives are mostly what we see on earth. Jesus comes to bring God's peace through reconciliation, healings, and restoring justice. God's peace brings wholeness - a sense of living in equilibrium with God and his creation. Shalom!

My peace I
give to you.

John 14:27 (NET)

Reading Three

Isaiah 53:3-12 (ESV)

He was despised and rejected by men, a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief; and as one from whom men hide their faces he was despised, and we esteemed him not. 4 Surely he has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows; yet we esteemed him stricken, smitten by God, and afflicted. 5 But he was pierced for our transgressions; he was crushed for our iniquities; upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace, and with his wounds we are healed. 6 All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned—every one—to his own way; and the LORD has laid on him the iniquity of us all. 7 He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth; like a lamb that is led to the slaughter, and like a sheep that before its shearers is silent, so he opened not his mouth. 8 By oppression and judgment he was taken away; and as for his generation, who considered that he was cut off out of the land of the living, stricken for the transgression of my people? 9 And they made his grave with the wicked and with a rich man in his death, although he had done no violence, and there was no deceit in his mouth. 10 Yet it was the will of the LORD to crush him; he has put him to grief; when his soul makes an offering for guilt, he shall see his offspring; he shall prolong his days; the will of the LORD shall prosper in his hand. 11 Out of the anguish of his soul he shall see and be satisfied; by his knowledge shall the righteous one, my servant, make many to be accounted righteous, and he shall bear their iniquities. 12 Therefore I will divide him a portion with the many, and he shall divide the spoil with the strong, because he poured out his soul to death and was numbered with the transgressors; yet he bore the sin of many, and makes intercession for the transgressors.

Matthew 8:14-17 (ESV)

And when Jesus entered Peter's house, he saw his mother-in-law lying sick with a fever. 15 He touched her hand, and the fever left her, and she rose and began to serve him. 16 That evening they brought to him many who were oppressed by demons, and he cast out the spirits with a word and healed all who were sick. 17 This was to fulfil what was spoken by the prophet Isaiah: "He took our illnesses and bore our diseases.

Romans 5:1-2; 8:1-2

Therefore, since we have been declared righteous by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, 2 through whom we have also obtained access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and we rejoice in the hope of God's glory.

8:1 There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. 2 For the law of the life-giving Spirit in Christ Jesus has set you free from the law of sin and death.

It was revealed to Isaiah that God's salvation, reconciliation and peace would only come through the suffering of Jesus. Through Jesus, God's peace (healing and wholeness), deliverance from demonic deception and oppression are available to individuals, families, nations and tribes. God's people have a wonderful message of peace for the world. Let's announce it like the angels did at Jesus' birth.

שְׁלוֹמִים

Shalom



Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts,
since as members of one body you were
called to peace. And be thankful.

Colossians 3:15 (NIV)

Reading Four

Isaiah 9:2-7 (ESV)

The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light; those who dwelt in a land of deep darkness, on them has light shone. 6 For to us a child is born, to us a son is given; and the government shall be upon his shoulder, and his name shall be called Wonderful Counsellor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. 7 Of the increase of his government and of peace there will be no end, on the throne of David and over his kingdom, to establish it and to uphold it with justice and with righteousness from this time forth and forevermore. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will do this.

John 14:27

Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you; I do not give it to you as the world does. Do not let your hearts be distressed or lacking in courage.

Isaiah envisioned Jesus as the 'Prince of Peace' who would usher in God's kingdom of eternal peace - reconciling people to God, reconciling people to people and restoring God's glory to his creation. Jesus hands out the gift of peace to all who willingly come to God through him and become members of God's kingdom. Living in God's peace relieves stress, destroys selfishness, focuses us on God's generosity and abundance (not our sense of scarcity), cures greed and produces courage.

Reading Five

Ephesians 2:11-18

Therefore remember that formerly you, the Gentiles in the flesh - who are called “uncircumcision” by the so-called “circumcision” that is performed on the body by human hands - 12 that you were at that time without the Messiah, alienated from the citizenship of Israel and strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world. 13 But now in Christ Jesus you who used to be far away have been brought near by the blood of Christ. 14 For he is our peace, the one who made both groups into one and who destroyed the middle wall of partition, the hostility, 15 when he nullified in his flesh the law of commandments in decrees. He did this to create in himself one new man out of two, thus making peace, 16 and to reconcile them both in one body to God through the cross, by which the hostility has been killed. 17 And he came and preached peace to you who were far off and peace to those who were near, 18 so that through him we both have access in one Spirit to the Father.

Jesus restores the relationship between God and humans through the cross, bringing God’s reign of peace that we enjoy now and will continue at the resurrection. God is no longer alien to us! By depositing himself in our hearts through the Holy Spirit, Jesus connects peoples of all tribes and nations, destroys hostility and enmity and brings peace between otherwise warring factions. Jesus is our peace and it is only in him that the world will have peace! Pray for God’s peace in people’s hearts, homes, our nations and our world.

Notes



Do not be afraid! Listen carefully, for I proclaim to you good news that brings great joy to all the people: Today your Savior is born in the city of David. He is Christ the Lord.

Luke 2:10-11 (NET)

Week 3: Jesus Brings Joy

Reading One

Luke 2:8-14

Now there were shepherds nearby living out in the field, keeping guard over their flock at night. 9 An angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were absolutely terrified. 10 But the angel said to them, “Do not be afraid! Listen carefully, for I proclaim to you good news that brings great joy to all the people: 11 Today your Savior is born in the city of David. He is Christ the Lord. 12 This will be a sign for you: You will find a baby wrapped in strips of cloth and lying in a manger.” 13 Suddenly a vast, heavenly army appeared with the angel, praising God and saying, 14 “Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace among people with whom he is pleased!”

We revisit the announcement to the shepherds of Jesus’ birth and the ‘great joy’ that heaven shared with humanity on that occasion. That joy bubbled over into great rejoicing by a vast heavenly army. On this occasion the heavenly army did not descend to earth for war but for celebration: to rejoice at the works of the Father and express joy for what God has done (Psalm 92:4). Jesus brought joy! Can you see that the joy announced and expressed was not just for his birth but also for the promises of God that are ‘yes’ and ‘amen’ in Christ (2 Cor. 1:20)? The joy was not only for what God has done but the expectation of the fulfilment of His promises bound up in Jesus. What has God done that brings you joy? What is God doing that will bring you joy?

Reading Two

MARY'S SONG OF JOY (LUKE 1:46-55)

And Mary said,
"My soul exalts the Lord,
and my spirit has begun to
rejoice in God my Savior,
because he has looked upon
the humble state of his servant.

For from now on all generations
will call me blessed,
because he who is mighty has
done great things for me, and
holy is his name;
from generation to generation
he is merciful to those who fear
him.

He has demonstrated power
with his arm; he has scattered
those whose pride wells up
from the sheer arrogance of
their hearts.

He has brought down the
mighty from their thrones, and
has lifted up those of lowly
position;
he has filled the hungry with
good things, and has sent the
rich away empty.

He has helped his servant
Israel, remembering his mercy,
as he promised to our
ancestors, to Abraham and to
his descendants forever."



Reading Three

1 Peter 1:3-9

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! By his great mercy he gave us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, 4 that is, into an inheritance imperishable, undefiled, and unfading. It is reserved in heaven for you, 5 who by God's power are protected through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time. 6 This brings you great joy, although you may have to suffer for a short time in various trials. 7 Such trials show the proven character of your faith, which is much more valuable than gold - gold that is tested by fire, even though it is passing away - and will bring praise and glory and honour when Jesus Christ is revealed. 8 You have not seen him, but you love him. You do not see him now but you believe in him, and so you rejoice with an indescribable and glorious joy, 9 because you are attaining the goal of your faith - the salvation of your souls.

We go from one birth (of Jesus) to another 'new birth' - the birth of us. And just like it was with Jesus, our birth is only the beginning of the fulfilment of great things the Father wants to do with us through Jesus Christ. We are so heavily God-nature-loaded and the realisation of that glorious status should sustain us through trials and cause us to explode with joy. Jesus did not only bring joy but in him we have been infused with God's joy when he emptied himself into us through his death and resurrection. Rejoice!

Reading Four

John 15:9-11

Just as the Father has loved me, I have also loved you; remain in my love. 10 If you obey my commandments, you will remain in my love, just as I have obeyed my Father's commandments and remain in his love. 11 I have told you these things so that my joy may be in you, and your joy may be complete.

Psalms 16:8-11

I constantly trust in the LORD; because he is at my right hand, I will not be upended. 9 So my heart rejoices and I am happy; My life is safe. 10 You will not abandon me to Sheol; you will not allow your faithful follower to see the Pit. 11 You lead me in the path of life; I experience absolute joy in your presence; you always give me sheer delight.

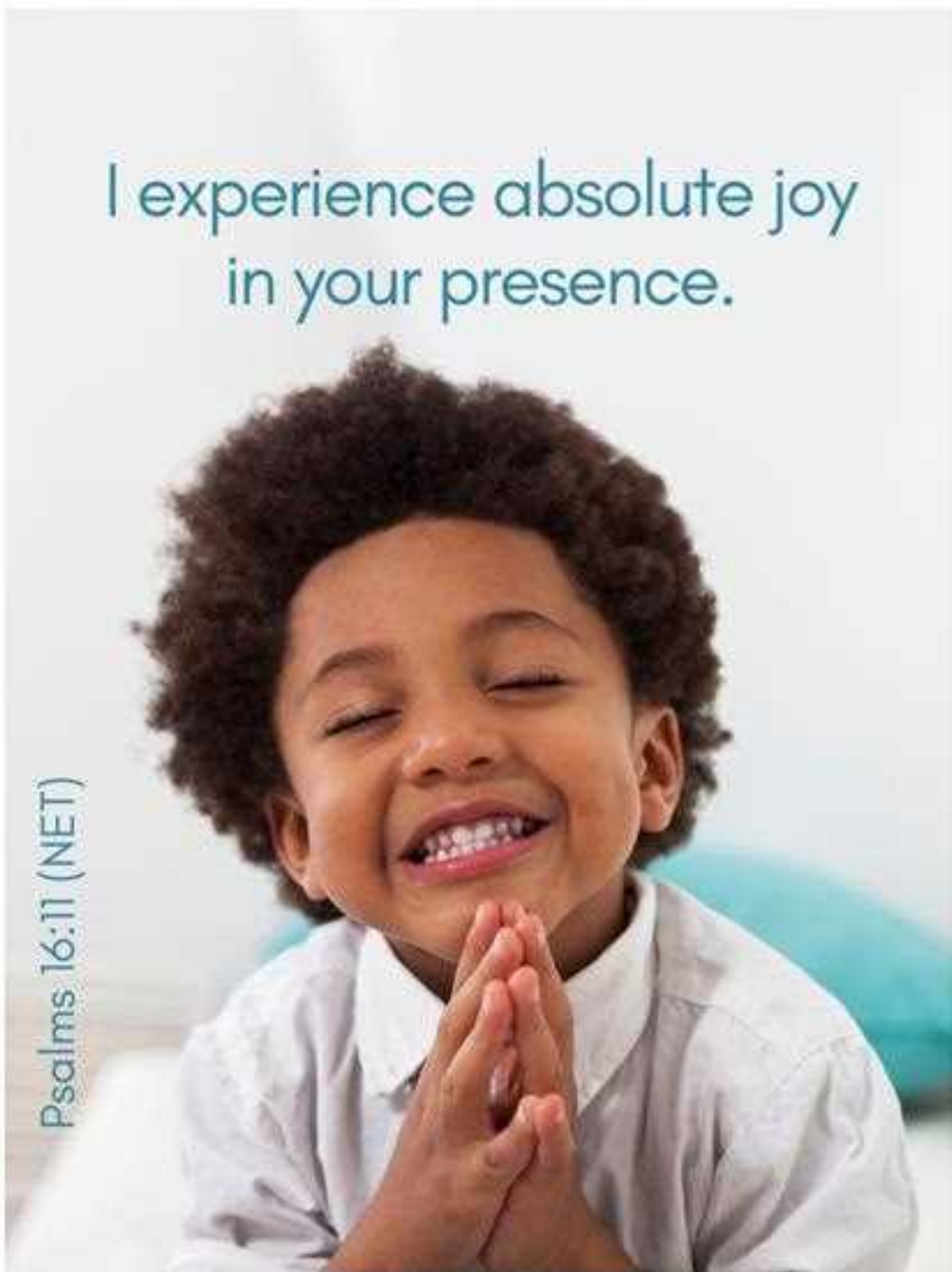
Galatians 5:22-23

But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, 23 gentleness, and self-control. Against such things there is no law.

Being filled with the Holy Spirit and being led by the Holy Spirit is to live the life of Jesus. It seems that life in Jesus, life in the Spirit of God is a life of joy. Let's desire God's presence and try to hide away from God. He wants us to be constantly near him and be filled with the joy of Jesus. Don't be afraid, present yourself to God as you are.

I experience absolute joy
in your presence.

Psalms 16:11 (NET)



Reading Five

Isaiah 61:1-3 (NIV)

The Spirit of the Sovereign LORD is on me, because the LORD has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim freedom for the captives and release from darkness for the prisoners, 2 to proclaim the year of the LORD'S favour and the day of vengeance of our God, to comfort all who mourn, 3 and provide for those who grieve in Zion— to bestow on them a crown of beauty instead of ashes, the oil of joy instead of mourning, and a garment of praise instead of a spirit of despair. They will be called oaks of righteousness, a planting of the LORD for the display of his splendour.

On one Sabbath Jesus read out this scripture in a Nazareth Synagogue. After reading, he proclaimed to the people: “Today this scripture is fulfilled in your hearing” (see Luke 4:16-19). Jesus is our joy, the works he has done and continues to do brings us beauty and joy. Let these not just be words on a page. Pray them into reality in your life. Go before God and get drenched with his oil and come off with his radiating beauty.



Notes



In this the love of God was made manifest among us, that God sent his only Son into the world, so that we might live through him.

1 John 4:9 (ESV)

Week 4: Jesus, God's Love Expressed

Reading One

John 3:14-18

Just as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up, 15 so that everyone who believes in him may have eternal life.” 16 For this is the way God loved the world: He gave his one and only Son, so that everyone who believes in him will not perish but have eternal life. 17 For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world should be saved through him. 18 The one who believes in him is not condemned. The one who does not believe has been condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the one and only Son of God.

John 15:9-15

Just as the Father has loved me, I have also loved you; remain in my love. 10 If you obey my commandments, you will remain in my love, just as I have obeyed my Father's commandments and remain in his love. 11 I have told you these things so that my joy may be in you, and your joy may be complete. 12 My commandment is this - to love one another just as I have loved you. 13 No one has greater love than this - that one lays down his life for his friends. 14 You are my friends if you do what I command you. 15 I no longer call you slaves, because the slave does not understand what his master is doing. But I have called you friends, because I have revealed to you everything I heard from my Father.

1 John 4:9-10

By this the love of God is revealed in us: that God has sent his one and only Son into the world so that we may live through him. 10 In this is love: not that we have loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the atoning sacrifice for our sins.

Jesus arrived in our world, embodying God's love, revealing God's love, making God's love real to us. God is rich in love, as we read above, but more than that, he is love! God does not just accumulate riches for himself or become love for himself. The triune God has always been and will forever will be other-centred and self-giving. This is how we are drawn into God's love, not because we initiate the move toward God but that God takes the initiative to draw us to himself through Jesus, to build a community that receive and spread his love in the world. Oh the wonderful love of God! Do you feel condemned or loved?



Reading Two

1 Corinthians 13:1-8

If I speak in the tongues of men and of angels, but I do not have love, I am a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal. 2 And if I have prophecy, and know all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have all faith so that I can remove mountains, but do not have love, I am nothing. 3 If I give away everything I own, and if I give over my body in order to boast, but do not have love, I receive no benefit. 4 Love is patient, love is kind, it is not envious. Love does not brag, it is not puffed up. 5 It is not rude, it is not self-serving, it is not easily angered or resentful. 6 It is not glad about injustice, but rejoices in the truth. 7 It bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. 8 Love never ends.

Romans 8:35-39

Who will separate us from the love of Christ? Will trouble, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or danger, or sword? 36 As it is written, "For your sake we encounter death all day long; we were considered as sheep to be slaughtered." 37 No, in all these things we have complete victory through him who loved us! 38 For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor heavenly rulers, nor things that are present, nor things to come, nor powers, 39 nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in creation will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

What is the quality of God's love? God's love is everlasting (Jer. 31:3) in Christ Jesus. How would you respond to this love?



**The LORD
is
Rich
in
Love**

Psalms 145:8 (NIV)

Reading Three

Deuteronomy 6:4-5

Listen, Israel: The LORD is our God, the LORD is one! 5 You must love the LORD your God with your whole mind, your whole being, and all your strength.

Mark 12:28-34

Now one of the experts in the law came and heard them debating. When he saw that Jesus answered them well, he asked him, “Which commandment is the most important of all?” 29 Jesus answered, “The most important is: ‘Listen, Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is one. 30 Love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength.’ 31 The second is: ‘Love your neighbour as yourself.’ There is no other commandment greater than these.” 32 The expert in the law said to him, “That is true, Teacher; you are right to say that he is one, and there is no one else besides him. 33 And to love him with all your heart, with all your mind, and with all your strength and to love your neighbour as yourself is more important than all burnt offerings and sacrifices.”

Jesus did not just embody God’s love but through him God’s love has been spread out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit. Being full of love, we should love God with sincere hearts and spread God’s love to the world around us through the gospel and God-inspired practical ways.

Reading Four

1 John 4:13-20

By this we know that we reside in God and he in us: in that he has given us of his Spirit. 14 And we have seen and testify that the Father has sent the Son to be the Savior of the world.

15 If anyone confesses that Jesus is the Son of God, God resides in him and he in God. 16 And we have come to know and to believe the love that God has in us. God is love, and the one who resides in love resides in God, and God resides in him. 17 By this love is perfected with us, so that we may have confidence in the day of judgment, because just as Jesus is, so also are we in this world. 18 There is no fear in love, but perfect love drives out fear, because fear has to do with punishment. The one who fears punishment has not been perfected in love. 19 We love because he loved us first.

20 If anyone says "I love God" and yet hates his fellow Christian, he is a liar, because the one who does not love his fellow Christian whom he has seen cannot love God whom he has not seen.

As we come towards the end of this season, we have seen God's glory and fullness in Jesus Christ. Jesus did not come to the earth just to be one highly spectacular person. Ultimately, God is making those who trust in Jesus to embody his glory and power. As Christians or 'little Christs' (little anointed ones) we should scatter God's love, joy, peace and hope, all over the world wherever we go. That is the way we make the world, which includes our enemies, see and know God.

Love

ONE ANOTHER



AS I HAVE

John 13:34

Loved You

Reading Five

Leviticus 19:33-35

When a foreigner resides with you in your land, you must not oppress him. 34 The foreigner who resides with you must be to you like a native citizen among you; so you must love him as yourself, because you were foreigners in the land of Egypt. I am the LORD your God. 35 You must not do injustice in the regulation of measures, whether of length, weight, or volume.

1 John 3:16-18

We have come to know love by this: that Jesus laid down his life for us; thus we ought to lay down our lives for our fellow Christians. 17 But whoever has the world's possessions and sees his fellow Christian in need and shuts off his compassion against him, how can the love of God reside in such a person? 18 Little children, let us not love with word or with tongue but in deed and truth.

Matthew 5:43-48

You have heard that it was said, 'Love your neighbour' and 'hate your enemy.' 44 But I say to you, love your enemy and pray for those who persecute you, 45 so that you may be like your Father in heaven, since he causes the sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous. 46 For if you love those who love you, what reward do you have? Even the tax collectors do the same, don't they? 47 And if you only greet your brothers, what more do you do? Even the Gentiles do the same, don't they? 48 So then, be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect.

Notes





May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as
you trust in him, so that you may overflow with hope
by the power of the Holy Spirit.

Romans 15:13 (NIV)



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