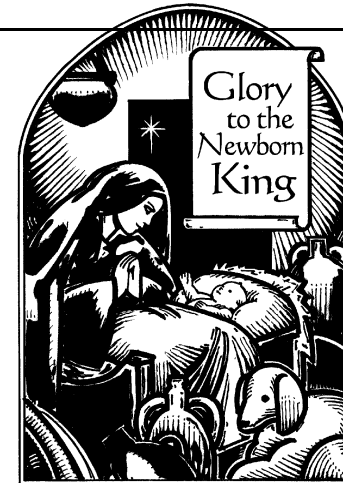


LORD  
OF  
*Lords*  
— & —  
KING  
OF  
*Kings*

Devotions for Advent  
2019



## **Jesus: King of kings and Lord of lords**

The years pass by quickly, don't they? It is hard to believe this is the twenty-second edition of this devotional, authored and published by the congregation who call "home" the building at 1 Cedar Grove Lane in Grand Marais, MN. What began as an exercise to assist faithful people to delve more deeply into the wonder of grace at the heart of Christmas has become a treasured tradition of prayer, study, reflection, devotion, and communication.

We've come to appreciate that there is so much more in and behind and under and around the Advent and Christmas season than parties, and presents, and songs, and services. The eternal Word of God became flesh. God became man. The Sovereign took on the form of the servant. The Lawmaker became the Law-Keeper. The Creator took on the life of the created. What wonder, what marvelous mercy is this!

This year we have adopted the theme "King of kings and Lord of lords" for our meditations, and have assigned each week of Advent (and the days after Christmas through New Year's) a sub-theme to assist our pondering. The first week's reflections focus on the role of the Word of God as Creator and Source. Next, we'll consider Jesus the King in his role as Savior. For the third week, we'll turn our attention to the dual role of Shepherd Jesus fulfills as King over his people. Before Christmas, we'll delve into what it means for Jesus, the newborn King, to be sovereign over all he created. And we will close our contemplative season feasting on the idea of Jesus as supreme King, "King of kings and Lord of lords, " as the Bible presents him in his ultimate role.

Each year folks at Cornerstone offer themselves to the task of pondering God's word and prayerfully presenting the results of their prayer and study. We ask them to report in these pages how the word they meditated upon intersected with their life and experience in the context of the Advent and Christmas season. We ask of you, dear reader, the same prayerful, faithful effort: seek Christ this Christmas and explore the myriad ways your life intersects with Jesus Christ the King of kings and the Lord of lords.

## Jesus the Source

The Bible opens with these words, “In the beginning, God . . . .” The phrase is more than a time stamp, like the date on a digital picture, allowing us to place God on a chronological map of time. These words provide the framework within which we must understand all that follows.

“In the beginning, God . . . .” points us to the reality that prior to the existence of anything else in all creation, God alone existed. He was, in Himself, the meaning and purpose and fulfilment of all that existed. With His creative action, “in the beginning, God . . . .” reminds us that nothing has really changed. God is in Himself the sum total of all meaning and purpose regarding creation. Everything that now exists does so at His command and for His purpose.

God is the source of life and light. God is the source of meaning and purpose. God is the source of wisdom and understanding. God is the source of all that is good and right and worthy. God is the source against which all right and wrong is measured. “In the beginning, God!”

The Apostle John points out to us, in the opening words of his Gospel, that Jesus Christ, the Word of God, was in the beginning, was with God, was God, and that the Word became flesh and dwelled among us. Jesus is God come in human flesh and as God is the source of existence and purpose for all that exists.

The little Baby in the manger, of whom angels sing and shepherds testify, whom kings visit with the riches of the world, this little Baby is Jesus Christ, the source of all that is.

## Creation

I like to cook. Maybe that’s because I like to eat. For me, cooking is a creative outlet. I like to try new recipes and mix it up a little bit when I cook. I will do a little internet search and find something that sounds good. Then I will find two or three other recipes for the same dish. I take the general idea from all the recipes and bits and pieces from each of the recipes and put it all together to create something unique.

Actually, it is a false statement to say that I can create something. All I can do is rearrange the ingredients. I cannot create the ingredients. A carpenter can build a house by rearranging lumber and nails, but he or she can’t create the supplies. An artist who paints a picture is merely rearranging the paint. A poet is simply rearranging words in their poem and a musician the notes in the song. All that we can do as part of God’s creation is to rearrange or reorder what He has created. We can create nothing new. Even Satan is limited to trying to corrupt God’s creation. He can take nothing from it or add anything to it. Only God can truly create.

God’s invisible attributes, His eternal power and divine nature are seen in His creation so that we may know about Him. Sin prevents us from actually knowing Him. As surely as God is the only one who can create, He is the only one who can save us from sin and draw us into a right relationship with himself through His son Jesus. The King of Kings and Lord of Lords, the God who created the heavens and the earth wants you to know Him.

*Heavenly Father, creator and sustainer of everyone and everything, please continue to open my eyes and my heart so that I can see you and know you as you truly are. Amen.*

–John Hay

**Monday December 2, 2019**

**READ: John 1:1-3**

The Word Was God

*“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.”*

“In the beginning” takes us to the moment of creation. That the Word was with God suggests relationship, face to face, equality. This relationship has always been. There was only one time that bond was broken: the Word, Jesus Christ, of whom the Apostle John wrote just a few lines later, “The Word, through whom all things were created, became flesh and dwelt among us. We beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten Son of the Father,” took on our sin, creating a separation between Him and the God with whom He had always been One.

He chose to obey the Father’s direction even in this separation. One implication of Christ’s faithfulness to the Father’s will is that we can discover the fact that God is the good in all: the good in creation and even the good in what we think of as bad, as in the ten plagues God sent upon Egypt as incentive to release His chosen people from slavery (Exodus 9:14).

As I embark on this new adventure moving from Grand Marais and returning to live in Austin, Texas, it is comforting to rest in the fact that I serve the true Creator, God, Who has not lost control of any aspect of life, and Who invests His good in all the aspects of my life..

*Lord, keep me keenly aware and alert to Your righteous authority, thus keeping me humble and meek.*

–Tammie Corder

**Tuesday December 3, 2019**

**READ: John 1:14**

Full of Grace and Truth

*“And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us and we have seen His glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth.”*

The Apostle John, the one who calls himself, “the disciple who leaned on Jesus,” proclaims in this text that the glory and Word of God became real, human flesh. Jesus Christ, the Creator, Sustainer and Conqueror of the universe, breathed, ate, walked, and dwelt among His creation.

Moreover, Jesus was not partially complete in things He did and said. Rather, He was and is FULL of grace and truth; He lacks nothing!

The receiving of His grace and the planting of my feet on the bedrock of Christ as Truth is a daily surrender for me. The weight of my imperfections and insecurities and feelings of inadequacy as a husband, a father, an employee, a leader and a servant of God must be crucified every day. In Christ, there is full grace, enough grace, abounding grace to cover my sin and make me new. It is a leaning on Christ for my internal battles.

The world is full of lies. But there is an eternal Word, Jesus Christ, who does not bow to societal popularities and constructs. Externally, there is a battle, not against flesh and blood, but against the lies that circulate waging war against my joy in Christ and suppression of His Truth in the world. That too is leaning on the Word, every day!

*Father, may my hope be firmly planted in the Truth and Grace found in Your Son, Jesus Christ. Help me lean on Him every day, receiving the fullness that He purchased at Calvary to the glory of your praise. Amen.*

–Mike Crotteau

Wednesday December 4, 2019

READ: Colossians 1:15-17

He Is!

I have believed in Jesus for over 45 years yet too often I take Him for granted. These verses cause me to reflect anew who Jesus really is. In Colossians **He is:** the beginning, before all things, the firstborn of all creation, the image of the invisible God. The author of Hebrews states it beautifully. "**He is** the radiance of the glory of God."

Paul tells us in Romans **He is:** the One Who died, was raised, is at the right hand of God, interceding for us. In 1<sup>st</sup> John **He is:** righteous, pure, faithful and just to forgive our sins. In Hebrews again **He is** able to save to the uttermost. **He is:** the Messiah, the Son of God (John 20, true God and eternal life (I John 5), Lord of lords, and King of kings (Rev 17). **He is:** all and is all in all, is your life (Col 3).

In John 9 Jesus found the blind man the Jews had cast out and said, "Do you believe in the Son of Man?" He answered, "And who is he, sir, that I may believe in him?" Jesus said to him, "You have seen him, and **He is** speaking to you." He said, "Lord, I believe," and he worshiped Him. In Mark 10 Bartimaeus is crying out and Jesus said, "Call him." And they called the blind man, saying to him, "Take heart. Get up; **He is** calling you."

This Advent season take extra time to reflect on Jesus. Is He speaking to you, is He calling to you? Let's all take heart and say, "Lord, I believe" and worship our great Savior and King.

*Lord Jesus, thank You for loving me, for calling me, for saving me to the uttermost!*

—John Hill

Thursday December 5, 2019

READ: Genesis 1:27

Angry, Should I Be?

Creating us "in His image" is an incredible thought. Our example of God is His son, Jesus who expressed His emotions. He wept at Lazarus' death (John 11:35) and expressed anger as He made a whip of cords and drove the money changers out of the temple (John 2:15).

My parents were great, but they failed to correctly teach about understanding emotions. My mother stated, "*Never get angry, only crazy people get angry.*" This thinking caused many problems throughout my life. At a young age, I remember kicking holes in my bedroom door as my brother attempted to hold me in my room. In high school, my anger was expressed passive-aggressively by clogging drinking fountains with pencils. I did not know why I did this. Feelings were buried. In a college social work class, I was labeled "the most defensive." In a post graduate class on Human Relations, I was still dealing with the same issue of understanding anger and wrote a paper with the above title.

As a new Christian, I wanted to do things God's way. I looked to the Bible and found many verses about anger. One of my favorites is Ephesians 4:26, "*Be angry and do not sin; do not let the sun go down on your anger...*" I finally had permission to be angry as long as I handled it properly and didn't keep it. Another is James 1:20 "*...the anger of man does not produce the righteousness of God.*"

Now, I always try to acknowledge my feelings, both positive and negative. I try to respond the way Jesus would, with guidance from the Holy Spirit (see Galatians 5:22).

—Randall Boyd

*Dear God, thank you for creating us in your image and for your Word that provides guidance.*

Friday December 6, 2019

READ: Genesis 2:15-17

### Nothing Like the Original

The perfect, holy God placed the perfect Adam, who had a perfect relationship with Him, into the perfect garden to tend the perfect trees with their perfect fruit. God said that all the perfect fruit could be eaten, except the perfect fruit from the perfect tree of the knowledge of good and evil, or “they would surely die.”

It wasn't long after they entered the perfect garden that the devil came and tempted Adam and Eve to doubt God's goodness and love for them. Satan led them to distrust God's motives in keeping them from eating the good fruit from one tree. The fruit looked delicious, and since the devil told them they could be wise like God if they ate it, they did. Instantly they died to their perfect nature, their perfect spiritual heart, and more importantly to their perfect relationship with God. They didn't die physically at that moment, but they did die eventually.

Even though my family regularly went to church and knew that God was the creator, none of us really knew who Jesus or the Holy Spirit were. We certainly had no idea what a relationship with God was. We had never owned or read a Bible. It was not until I was 13 that a camp counselor explained the difference between “knowing about God” and “knowing Him personally.” She said that I was just as “dead” as Adam and Eve were after they disobeyed God. Then she showed me from the Bible that there was nothing I could do to change the “death verdict”, but that God had sent His perfect Son, Jesus to come to earth to live, to die on the cross to pay the penalty for my sin, and to rise from the dead proving that the debt was paid and accepted by God. I believed what she said and repented of my sin and accepted Christ's perfect work on my behalf. I was forgiven and because of my new relationship with God, though I will die physically one day, I will live forever in heaven with Him. — Linda McIntire

*Jesus, thank you for demonstrating your immeasurable love by dying for my sins and giving me a new and forever life.*

Saturday December 7, 2019

READ: Genesis 3:1-13

### Deception and Discontent

Did God really say...? Did God really mean...? Ever since that first time in the garden, these questions have been weapons of the enemies of God. The enemies also use these phrases and more to deceive those who would follow God: “That was then, this is now,” “Change happens, we must change with the times.”

God is eternal and unchanging. He means what He says.

Deception is the weapon of Satan and those who are his. Adam and Eve had it all. There was the Garden, where God had provided abundance, and there was the presence of God! What more could they want? There was that one thing - the thing that was forbidden. They did not need it, but because it was there, they wanted it. Why did they fall for the strategy of the serpent? His deceit led them to discontent. They wanted more than they had. Deceit and discontent led to disobedience and death. It still does.

God provides what I need, but lies of Satan and self tempt me to want more. Why do I bite? Why do I take Satan's bait? Because I want more - discontent rather than gratitude. But the “more” that the world tempts me with never leads to lasting contentment. Contentment with what God in His goodness and mercy has given me leads to peace. The gift of faith plus my obedience to the commands of Jesus lead to faithfulness.

I must not allow myself to be deceived. I must not believe I deserve more of what the world offers. God has gifted me abundantly. Christ must always be sufficient!

*Lord, may Your truth fill me and be my shield against the lies of the enemy, whether the enemy be Satan or self.*

—Irene Laine

## Jesus the Savior

Joseph faced a tough decision. Under the ancient Jewish legal system, he and Mary were legally bound to each other. They and their families had signed the agreement, the ketubah, which meant, for all practical purposes, that the two were married, though the religious and personal aspects of a wedding and a marriage had not yet been accomplished. And now, before he and his wife consummated their marriage, before there was a wedding night, there was a baby. And the child was not Joseph's.

Joseph is described as a "just man" who was unwilling to expose Mary to the social stigma and shame that would most certainly target her as evidence of her clear indiscretion began to show. Rather than make a public spectacle that would be required to clear his own name, Joseph decided to divorce her quietly, without public fanfare. He would share in her shame but not her guilt.

It was into this context God spoke to Joseph in a dream revealing that He Himself was responsible for Mary's pregnancy, that the child was both His and His will, and that the child would have an eternal purpose—His "name was to be called Jesus for he would save his people from their sins."

Today as much as then, we need a Savior. Our sin is no less than the sin of those days. Our need for divine forgiveness and new life thrives no less than theirs. A savior according to the Bible is one who brings people back into fellowship with God through their own love for God and faithful obedience to God's will. Jesus is just that Savior. Jesus, the Source of all life took on human life so that human life, given to sin since the day of the Fall, might be rescued from death and restored to eternal joy. Jesus, through His life and death on our behalf, is the One who saves His people from their sin by taking the consequences of sin upon Himself and accepting the righteous judgment of God: death on the cross.

Sunday December 8, 2019

READ: Romans 3:23

### All Have Sinned

I praise God that I live in the time when His whole plan for salvation has been revealed! If I read this passage all by itself, I can easily feel overwhelmed, because I realize that even on my best days I fall way short of the Glory of God. I thank the Holy Trinity again for all the revelation and assurance they have provided for sinners like me.

I have been participating in a Bible study on Ecclesiastes and it seems to me the hardest part of keeping this book in the context of the time it was written is that the people of that time did not have the revelations we now have. Praise God!

It is very easy for me to get caught up in the hustle and bustle of everyday life and start to believe that I am in charge of my own destiny. Again I thank God for loving me and opening my eyes and ears to His revelations. He helps me realize that by myself I don't even have the power to keep my body alive when calamity strikes, but that it is Him Who gives all things their life breath.

I have slowly learned to turn to scripture and prayer throughout my day to get a proper perspective of who is omnipotent and who is not. Many are the times in my life when He has carried me and left only one set of footprints in the sand.

*Lord, I pray for Your strength and insight to guide me through each day. I thank You for your living Word, Jesus Christ, Who does for us what we cannot do on our own. Come, Lord Jesus!*

—Steve McNeally

**Monday December 9, 2019**

**READ: Romans 6:23**

### The Rest of the Story

“For the wages of sin is death.” Countless souls have lived and died with this warning heard but unheeded. My own mother received this message while unmarried and pregnant with me. Like so many others, she walked away from the Church never to return. It was easier that way.

Nobody wants to hear that their sin makes them unworthy of being loved by God. But what if that day in 1965 had gone differently? What if she had heard the rest of the story? What if that priest had shown compassion instead of condemnation? While it is important people understand where sin leads, it is equally important the rest of the story is told!

Thanks to conscience, when we sin, people usually feel bad on their own. They know they are guilty and don't need an unqualified reminder from the pious. What they need is a reminder from God's ordinary people that they don't have to carry that burden, that each day is a new opportunity to accept God's free gift of salvation and another chance for a new beginning. When Christians fail to deliver this message and offer only judgement and condemnation, the Gospel is often permanently rejected for no other reason than the words of a single misguided message. The name of Jesus is reduced to merely a word and the life changing significance of His atoning death is lost.

We know the wages of sin is death, but let's never again leave out the rest of the story. Christ as an expression of God's love for us, through His death on the cross, paid the wages of sin for all who trust in Him. Accept God's love and accept Him as your Savior.

*Lord, I give you thanks and praise that You paid the price of sin for me, and that through You, eternity holds the joy of life in Your presence.*

–Cathy and Ken Benson

**Tuesday December 10, 2019**

**READ: Isaiah 7:10-14**

### Some Blessings Should Be Taken

We chose this passage for this devotional and this place in the devotional because it prophecies the virgin birth of the Messiah, Jesus Christ, about 600 years before His birth. But, as important as this prophecy—and its later fulfilment—is to the Christian faith, I want to ask you to look with me at a different aspect of this passage.

Israel is a divided nation at this point in history. The northern kingdom is ruled by a man named Remaliah who resides in Samaria. The southern kingdom, called Judah, is ruled by Ahaz who reigns in Jerusalem. Samaria has joined with the king of Syria to attack Judah and Ahaz is terrified. God sends the prophet Isaiah to Ahaz with a message, “Be careful. Be quiet. Do not fear.” As an expression of divine love and grace God offers to let Ahaz request any sign he can imagine that God will keep him and his nation safe.

Ahaz refuses. He turns away the gift of grace on the basis of greater personal piety. “I will not ask, and I will not put the LORD to the test,” he says. It is a bad case of false pride because Ahaz has not initiated the request, God did. Ahaz essentially says he does not believe God's offer is genuine or authentic.

Many today doubt God's love for them even though God has actively demonstrated his love for them by sending His Son, Jesus, into the world, born of a virgin, the sign to Ahaz. Jesus does not buy God's love for us with his life and death. Jesus comes, and lives, and dies, and is raised from the dead, because God already loves us!

Ahaz did nothing, nor could he have done anything, to deserve the grace God offered him, both in the sign and in the salvation from his enemies. God offered Ahaz His blessing, not because Ahaz deserved it through some action of his own but because God is love. God's actions reveals His pre-existing love. God loves you today. He loves you regardless of your current status. The coming of Christ—His life and his death and his resurrection—is the proof of God's love for you.

–Pastor Dale McIntire



Wednesday December 11, 2019      READ: Luke 1:26-38

Living Out Trust

*“Then said Mary to the angel, ‘How shall this be as I am a virgin?’”* The angel explained: the Holy Spirit would come upon her. Mary submitted to God’s plan and answered, *“Behold the handmaiden of the Lord. Be it unto me according to thy word.”*

I grew up in a dysfunctional family. When I was 14 years old I was placed in foster homes for the next three years. My parents moved to Alaska, and I felt very sad, lonely and unwanted.

But through the years ahead, the Lord kept me close to Himself.

I married right after graduation; I was desperate for a home and family. The Lord blessed me with three daughters who grew up in a Christian home. They loved to sing along with me for the Lord.

My dad and mother returned from Alaska; my mother died shortly after their return. My father, being alone, came to live with us. Our biggest miracle of all was to see him give his heart to the Lord!

The Lord has kept me in His care and shown me His love. I can’t begin to understand His goodness and mercy to me. I choose to submit to His will for me and live for Him and not for myself. His ways are always for our best because He loves us so much!

*Lord, thank You for always caring for me, for choosing me and granting to me Your goodness and mercy. I know I can always trust Your ways.*

–Janet Roesner

Thursday December 12, 2019      READ: Luke 2:1-14

King of Kings

When Jesus was born in Bethlehem, His mother Mary wrapped Him in swaddling clothes and laid Him in a manger. What a wonderful common place to be born! God’s Son can now be known as Savior to everyone from shepherds to great kings.

That inclusiveness reminds me of my religious background, growing up in northern rural Minnesota. I attended a small church, the Gunflint Chapel. I went to Sunday School and was in the children’s choir. The girls wore black skirts and white blouses; the boys wore black pants and white shirts. We all wore western style hats. This really made me feel included in the group. We would sing during church, especially for the Christmas program. We would each read a message from the Bible and memorize it.

One pastor I really remember was Pastor Graham. He had a wonderful wife and three children, all so friendly and kind. He often came to our home and my mother made a meal for all of us.

I attended there through adolescence but I did not attend church again until we prepared to marry. My husband was raised Catholic and we were required to take religious classes. When we married, the priest wore special vestments. During the ceremony, the priest called me by the wrong name. I could not receive communion because I was not Catholic. This made me feel excluded.

The building was beautiful. The flowers—we hand-picked lilacs in full bloom—were beautiful. Our family provided cake, rolls, punch, coffee, a special centerpiece, and the main course. Our guests brought food to share, to make them feel included. But I felt excluded by the way I was treated by church doctrine that day.

In recent years my husband and I attended Cornerstone Community Church; we were baptized there. I have accepted Jesus as my Lord and Savior! We have never felt so welcomed!

*Thank You, God, for working in me daily. I look forward to what You have in store for me in the future.*

– Tracy Scully

**Friday December 13, 2019**

**READ: Luke 2:14-20**

### God Chooses the Simple

Angels appeared to shepherds in the field to announce the birth of Jesus. They could have announced this message to anyone, but they chose simple shepherds of the lower class to share the message of God being born in Bethlehem.

Sometimes God chooses the simple people to share His message of salvation. It does not have to be upper class or well-educated people but people with God's Spirit in them to share what they have seen and heard to all who will listen.

The shepherds could not wait to find Jesus. They "made haste" to Bethlehem. Once they saw Him, they were eager to spread the word with everyone they saw.

When Jesus enters our heart through salvation we need to be eager to share with everyone we see. It does not need to be with eloquent words or knowledge but with the passion and love Christ has given us.

Over the years of living in Grand Marais, God has given me various opportunities to share His message with the international students who come to town, with newcomers arriving to live here, or others passing through. I have enjoyed meeting new people every year and, when prompted by the Holy Spirit, to share God's message and love with them.

Sometimes I feel I am not adequate but with God's Spirit in my life, I can share what He has done for me and hope it makes a difference in someone else's life. Never cease to take the opportunity to glorify God for what He has done for you.

*Lord, thank You for sending Your Son into this world to provide us with the means for salvation, giving all the glory to You.*

—Valerie Gustafson

**Saturday December 14, 2019**

**READ: Isaiah 9:6**

### Unto Us A Child

We recently visited the Ark Encounter in Williamstown, KY. This is a "life-sized" reproduction of Noah's Ark built to Biblical specifications. You can't imagine the size until you are in its belly and see all the cages and storage areas. (In this exhibition, there were 85 different kinds of dinosaurs on the Ark.) The protection it provided and the living conditions for the select few on board while God displayed His anger against humanity with the tempest of the flood is almost unfathomable. There are supporting informational signs throughout the Ark explaining in detail how and why each new bit of information seems to chisel away more and more at any doubter's disbelief.

The horrific experience of being cooped up in this vessel for almost a year while God performed human annihilation to rid the world of sin ended with God's covenant that never again would such an act of destruction be brought by His hand. Even though the rainbow was still in their sights, and all that devastation was still fresh on earth, sin found its way back into existence and continued to thrive.

The words from Isaiah reveal God's answer to continuing sin. The Messiah would be sent by God. His birth was proclaimed by the heavens and earth that He would be our Savior. He would be the one who would deliver us from sin. Jesus was known by many names, but He is the One who will bridge and strengthen our connection to God. Through Him we will have eternal life.

God fulfilled His promise to Noah of "never again" by instead sending His Son to relieve us of our sins. The birth and death of one Man did what a world-wide catastrophic flood could not accomplish. Jesus is our everything. It's not flood waters that will take away our sins, it is the blood of Jesus and our faith in Him that holds its promise.

—Lynn Doucette

*Thank You, God, for keeping Your promise and allowing us to know and love Your Son. Amen.*

## Jesus the Shepherd

Sunday December 15, 2019

READ: Isaiah 60:16b

The closest I ever came to shepherding, before becoming a local church pastor, were three little black lambs. They were triplets my Auntie Flo had among her flock. She named them Dale, Kathy, and Brian, after my siblings and me. I remember standing at a fence as a child and watching them cavort with the other sheep in the paddock.

There is a great deal more to being shepherd than merely owning sheep and naming lambs after family members. Shepherds care about sheep and shepherds care for sheep. Whatever the motivation, deeply personal or generally economic, the welfare of the sheep matters immensely to the shepherd. Jesus demonstrates a motive beyond the mundane. Jesus shepherds His sheep, His flock, His people with infinite, eternal, and unconditional love.

Jesus loved the Father with perfect love, even to the extent of taking on the form of a servant and surrendering His life to death on the cross. Jesus loves the ones the Father loves with perfect love as well.

As you read this week's selections, we invite you to ponder prayerfully the ways in which God has graciously shepherded you through His Son, Jesus. Consider how God speaks wisdom into your life through the words of Jesus. Think about how God bestows grace into your life through the life of Jesus. Marvel at the ways God leads and nurtures hope and peace and joy in your life through the ongoing work of Christ.

Jesus functions as Shepherd both in who He is and in what He does. How does He shepherd you?

### Names

I wonder how many names there are for God? Instead of looking it up or typing as many as I can remember, I'm going to guess there must be at least 150 names. Isaiah uses five: "I", "the Lord", "your Savior", "your Redeemer", and "the Mighty One of Jacob".

I recently had my first memory test that had three words (names): leader, seasonings, and table. I quickly thought of the initials - L, S and T. Easy, I thought, just like Schroeder, Tofte, Lutsen, only with Lutsen first, then Schroeder, then Tofte, all names I could remember. The doctor went on to the next item, which was to draw a clock with a specific time. After that she asked me what the three words were. I quickly replied "LEADER" but couldn't come up with the next two. Tried again, and still only remember LEADER. I could have told her I had been too busy trying to remember the names "Schroeder, Tofte and Lutsen" in the incorrect order if you were driving to Grand Marais from Duluth. But instead, I flunked the test.

When I was six years old, I simply asked Jesus into my heart. I didn't know all of His names, but Jesus was enough for me to love Him and want Him to be "in me". I've known Jesus now for 61 years, and Jesus is still the name I call Him the most. Now I understand better who "I" is, that He's my Lord, that I desperately needed Him as my Savior, am still grasping that my own sin needed Him to be my Redeemer, and that the God of Jacob is the God of me.

*Father God. I come to You with the help of Your indwelling Spirit, and I pray in Jesus' name that is above every name. Amen.*

—Mary Freeman

Monday December 16, 2019

READ: Matthew 16:16

“You Are the Messiah...”

*Simon Peter answered, “You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God.”*

This is the first time in the New Testament that someone names who Jesus really is— not a talented rabbi, not a prophet, but “the Messiah, the Son of the living God.”

I remember the first time that I confessed out loud who Jesus really is. I had agreed with people before. I had prayed to Him in the quiet of my mind many, many times. I am talking about the first time that I really said it all out loud and it really sank into my heart who He is for me personally.

Like many people, I was driven by desperation. It was a time of high stress in my life - work and the kids seemed to be teaming up to pile problem on top of problem with no good solutions. It was too much for me to handle on my own.

I was driving home from work, alone in the car. I don’t remember the exact words I used, but it went something like “Jesus - I can’t do this on my own. Please come into my life - into my heart. Show me how You want me to live, what You want me to do. I give my heart to You - Jesus, the Son of God.”

Immediately a sense of peace and serenity came over me - I knew I wasn’t alone and I knew He loved me. The God of the universe was with *me* and loved *me*! I still had the same problems to face. The stresses in my life didn’t just disappear. The difference was that I knew that I never had to face them alone any more.

*Jesus - thank You for coming to earth to live with us, to share our burdens, to save us, and not abandoning us in our times of need.*

—David Laine

Tuesday December 17, 2019

READ: Matthew 3:2

Repent...

Matthew 3:2 states, *Repent, for the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand.* Repent means to turn away from sin and confess your sin by mouth to our Father.

When I think about repenting, I realize how often I don’t confess my sins and ask for forgiveness. When I pray, I cover a lot of area about my own and other people’s lives, but what about my sin nature? How do I know I’ve sinned? All I need to do is compare my life with the Ten Commandments (Exodus 20).

The second part of this verse is “...*for the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand.*” Another way to look at this is “the Kingdom of God is at hand.” None of us knows when our time is up.

Just recently, we visited the Ark Encounter and the Creation Museum in Kentucky. If you are a believer, this will seriously reaffirm your faith. If you are not a believer, but seek the truth, this experience might be a defining moment in your life.

Noah was a righteous and faithful man living in a corrupt, sin-filled world. God was going to destroy that world by flood but offered salvation from judgement aboard the Ark. All a person had to do to be saved was recognize their sinful position, repent, and walk humbly through the door of the Ark. This account offers a parallel to our condition as humans today. Our sin threatens our peace, our lives, and our relationship with God. But God offers an answer to our condition, just as He did with the Ark. The answer is there in the person of Jesus. He is your salvation. All you need do is accept Him.

*God, thank You for giving me a second chance - Born again with Jesus as my Ark. Amen.*

—Bill Doucette

**Wednesday December 18, 2019      READ: Luke 17:20-21**

### The Kingdom Is Here!

The Pharisees asked Jesus when the Kingdom of God was coming. Jesus told them, "...the Kingdom of God is in your midst." The word "midst" is also translated as "within us" or "among us". Taken in context with the rest of the Bible, this means that the Kingdom of God has come and is coming. I believe in our personal lives through reading the word, prayer, and God's grace, the Kingdom of God is already "within us". It is here. It is not far away. Jesus lives in us and with us and is present every moment of every day.

Understanding this presence brings me a great sense of peace. Jesus is the "Prince of Peace" (Isaiah 9). Apart from Him there is no peace. In times of suffering it can be difficult to find this peace. In the last two years I have experienced the loss of loved ones, i.e. mother and two adult daughters. Also, my younger sister has recently been diagnosed with advanced terminal cancer. Through prayer and the comfort of Jesus, I have come to grips with it. There is still great sorrow, but "the joy of the Lord is my strength" (Nehemiah 8:10). I know that no matter what the difficulties, Jesus is present and will pull me through.

Of course, Jesus and the peace He offers isn't just available in times of suffering. Just sitting in the morning (with my coffee) reading the word and praying brings me peace. Spending time in nature and reflecting on God's handiwork through a morning sunrise or the vibrant fall colors, worshiping through song with others in church, the smile on my granddaughter's face, are all examples of sensing heavenly peace and joy.

*Thank You, Lord, that by responding to Your grace we can experience the peace and joy of Your Kingdom.*

–Jim Chupurdia

**Thursday December 19, 2019      READ: John 3:1-7**

### You Must Be Born Again!

"You must be born again." When the religious leader Nicodemus asked Jesus how to be part of the Kingdom of God, Jesus responded with a revolutionary concept: a person must be born again. Nicodemus initially didn't understand what Jesus was saying because he was focused on physical birth, and a second birth did not make sense. Jesus was referring to a spiritual birth which involves repentance and spiritual renewal. When I read this exchange I'm encouraged knowing this physical life is not all there is, and the requirement to spend eternity as part of God's Kingdom is quite simple.

I've heard it said that the Word of God is simple enough for a child to understand and deep enough to drown a theologian. The need to be born again fits this in that it's simple, but we make it difficult by our lack of understanding. I was raised in a devout Catholic home where salvation came through sacraments and the church. The concept of being born again was not discussed and honestly not understood. As I grew up, I encountered several "born agains" who were different from me in a very attractive way.

Like Nicodemus, I wanted to know what being born again was all about. Looking back on my early spiritual journey, it's cool to see how my search wasn't much different from Nicodemus all those years ago. Nicodemus was religious but wanted God personally. I was religious yet wanted to know God personally. The command to be born again didn't make sense to me either until I saw it real-time in friends and family who knew God personally. They had received God's gift of forgiveness by accepting Jesus as their personal Savior and were now part of God's Kingdom. Knowing Jesus is worth the search: the best gift ever!

*Dear Father, thank You for such a simple path to knowing You. Help us to always be ready to help our brothers and sisters searching to know You.*

–Monica Klanderud

**Friday December 20, 2019**

**READ: John 3:16-18**

For God So Loved...

*“For God so loved the world that He gave His only Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through Him. Whoever believes in Him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe is condemned already because he has not believed in the name of the only Son of God.”*

We almost all are familiar with vs.16, but 17 and 18 explain that God sent His Son into the condemned world for it to be saved. If we do not believe, we are still condemned. It is our choice to believe, and I came to that truth at a young age. It is between you and God. Not your family, not your friends, but you and God.

But your faith and prayer are your contribution to God’s saving the world. Through all our trials and suffering in this condemned world Christ is with us always and our faithfulness to Him testifies to God’s saving grace, sending an invitation to others to know and love God.

This year in our Sunday School project my verse was “*I can do all things through Him who strengthens me,*” Philippians 4:13 (ESV).

I have suffered with an abandonment issue for many years, even long before losing my mom when I was 17. With my faith and belief, Christ has strengthened me. And He has shown me that I am not alone in this world.

God is, and was, and always will be!

*Thank You, God, for sending Your Son to save this condemned world, and for always being there.*

–Valita Bockovich

**Saturday December 21, 2019**

**READ: Luke 15:4-7**

Each Person is Precious to God

Each person is precious to God. That was my first thought when I read this verse. Then I thought about all the” lost sheep” I am related to who haven’t accepted Jesus into their life and that makes me very sad. There are a lot of them; a son, sister, son-in-law, a daughter-in-law, two brothers and seven grandkids.

They’re all on my prayer list. Some days I beg God to call them to Jesus. Some days I ask Him to send a faithful Christian into their lives who could make a difference, someone they would listen to. I don’t see them on a regular basis, but when I do, I ask the Holy Spirit to give me an opportunity to say something that might get them thinking.

One time I felt that God was telling me to do something regarding my brothers. He wanted me to write them a letter. So I wrote to each of my two brothers telling them I didn’t want to get to heaven and have Jesus ask me, “What about your brothers?” I quoted John 14:6 and enclosed a Bible. That was a few years ago and I don’t know if that made any impression. I did ask one of them if he read the Bible at all and he said he might look at it sometime.

Sometimes I get a little depressed because I don’t see any progress. On the other hand, I can’t read people’s minds so I don’t know what’s going on in their heads. God could be working in their hearts and I don’t know it. Maybe I planted a seed and He will make it grow.

If you know any “lost sheep” who haven’t given their life to Jesus, I would encourage you to continue to pray for them and when there are opportunities, ask the Holy Spirit to help you say something that would touch their heart. Don’t give up! Each person is precious to God.

*Heavenly Father, please give me wisdom about what to do when an opportunity arises with someone who is a “lost sheep.”*

--Maxine Chupurdia

## Jesus the Sovereign

The idea of a sovereign God who rules absolutely in the lives of human beings rings foreign to a culture steeped in self-centered independence. We live “you’re-not-the-boss-of-me” lives resisting the authoritative control of others. Often we are like the toddler on the airplane who, when his mother insisted he sit in his seat and fasten his seatbelt, looked her in the eye and said, “I’m sitting on the outside but I’m standing on the inside!”

Our greatest resistance to God’s sovereignty, however, though it is often voiced in terms of the limitation to self, is really the fear that a sovereign God cannot be trusted any more than a sovereign human being. The problem, of course, is that God is not a human being, fallen and sinful. God is holy, just, righteous, gracious, and loving. He is wise and good, patient and kind. He is infinitely trustworthy. And He is all these things perfectly not partially.

God is not a little merciful, a measure compassionate, and mostly powerful. All that He is He is perfectly at all times. His sovereignty, His right and authority as Creator over all He creates, is, at all times and in all ways, perfect love, perfect grace, perfect wisdom, perfect righteousness, perfect holiness, perfect grace.

Look for the expressions of God’s authoritative action to accomplish His will and His purpose in the lives of the authors this week. All that God is, Christ is, for Christ is God. The Babe in the manger is the One Who sits upon the throne illumined with glory. He directs the course of history, revealed and hidden, according to His plan, for His purpose, and for His glory.

Sunday December 22, 2019

READ: Matthew 22:36-40

### The Greatest Commandment

From the time I was very young I was taught to put others before myself. I was the middle child, and a girl. Mother was sick, so taking care of housework and a younger sister was my job. Mother was a wonderful lady and I loved pleasing her. Putting little sister before myself was not so easy, but Mother made sure I learned to do it well.

Now that I am handicapped, I am so blessed that others put me before themselves. As I look back I find I never gave enough love to deserve being cared for like I am.

I have to work with my mind, for it wants to be sinful too often. My soul is God’s and I have to keep my thinking lined up with God’s thinking. Spending time in God’s Word really helps that. By reading and studying God’s Word we are keeping our minds stayed on Him, and that is perfect peace. Here we keep getting our heart changed, restored and renewed.

Now we are in a better place, loving God and loving my nation. I am still working on this, together with God.

*Lord, thank You for loving me enough to grow my heart to be more like You.*

–Tereice O’Kelley

**Monday December 23, 2019**

**READ: John 13:34**

Remember to Love One Another

As GOD commands us to “Love one another,” I’m reminded of a difficult time years ago.

A very good friend and coworker in EMS was living the day to day struggles of his fiancée dealing with cancer treatments. The costs were staggering. A few of us close friends decided to organize a benefit dinner to help them out with bills. The people in our small town were wonderful and very generous in giving toward our goal. I was going all around town for about two weeks gathering donations from the local businesses. Some made money donations and others gave food items for the planned dinner.

At that time in my life, money was very tight. I drove a 20+ year old truck. Gas mileage wasn’t the greatest, to say the least. But after a week of driving and a lot of miles covered, I began to notice that the gas gauge on that old truck never went down. Some how GOD made that old truck His tool to help me realize that I was doing His command and He supplied my needs.

As things went, the woman passed away before the planned dinner. However, it was very successful and we were able to help. Lots of people showed up and plenty of people helped out.

GOD often gives us reasons to follow His commands. We can come together to help others in time of need, but we often forget to follow His words in our day to day lives. Sometimes we need reminders of God’s mercy.

*Father GOD, help me to do thy will in all I do, even when I don’t know at the time, the “why.” Amen.*

–Patrick Scully

**Tuesday December 24, 2019**

**READ: 2 Corinthians 5:17**

*Therefore, if anyone is in Christ he is a new creation; the old has passed away, behold, the new has come.*

This was one of my father’s favorite Bible verses. He would quote it from memory often. He was born in 1915 to a mother that left Norway in disgrace. She arrived in the USA to give birth to her beloved son, Palmer. Palmer resided in an orphanage in Wisconsin for four years. Then his mother, Merot, got him and they made a home in Minnetonka Mills, Minnesota.

Palmer had a temper; he often got into scuffles. He also was gifted musically, always having his harmonica in his pocket! He loved and served his mother. He participated in church. Then on August 22, at 2 a.m., when he was 22 years old, Palmer was aroused by a vision, saw himself a sinner needing Jesus Christ. He cried out for mercy and salvation!

This is where 2 Corinthians 5:17 comes in. On the next day Palmer Olson was a new creation in Christ, the old was gone, the new came. The sky was bluer blue. The grass was greener green. And he no longer had a short fuse of a temper! Praise be to God! That transformation in 1937, carried him through a life of praise to and service for the Lord Jesus.

Our passage is in a context of reconciliation through Christ. Paul states, “knowing the fear of the Lord we persuade men,” and “the love of Christ constrains us.” Before Paul’s conversion, he had known Christ from a human point of view. But when it was revealed to him Who Jesus was: God, Paul was made a new creation “in Christ.” The living Christ was in him! His status from then on was: “an ambassador for Christ.”

Our passage teaches us that this transformation applies to anyone, “if any one is in Christ, he is a new creation.” All who are “in Christ” are His ambassadors, bringing the message of reconciliation with God.

–Bruce Olson

*Dear heavenly Father, we offer thanks for this Good News: “God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself,” may the love of Christ compel us to bring this message to all who may listen.*



Wednesday December 25, 2019      READ: John 11:25-27

### The Resurrection and the Life

Jesus calls Himself “the Resurrection.” Resurrection means to come alive after being dead. He also says that anyone who believes in Him, even though he dies, shall live.

Martha believed that Jesus was the Son of God, the Messiah, the One who was coming to save the world; that He was the One sent from God to provide eternal life; that He was the King of kings and Lord of lords. We can believe in who God is and what God can do but sometimes, even though we believe, we are not able to “reason it all out” into our daily life. Finally we come to a place in our life when we quit trying to reason it out and simply make a decision to live our life by faith in who He is. He becomes the “Resurrection” in our life.

We do not always know what God has planned for our life. It may be something different than what we think or want. We had several serious health experiences, right in a row, that we did not know were coming. I kept asking God, “Why have You allowed this?”

One day I was sitting on the couch with my Bible, praying devoutly to the Lord for His answers. I looked out the window at a beautiful blue sky with a lovely white fluffy cloud in it. Suddenly I had the distinct impression of something **new**. It was as if God was speaking to my heart saying, “Look up here at this sky and cloud. Don’t you see that I am above you, sitting on this cloud, always watching you and taking care of you? I can see you and will always be here for you. Can you trust Me to care for you? Can you obey Me and put your faith in my abilities and not your own? Lay it down, surrender it all to Me.”

That helped me to refocus on Jesus. He is the King of kings and Lord of lords in our life. We know that what the future holds is in His hands. Thanks be to God!                      –Patricia Gamer

*Dear Jesus, help me to believe that what You have started, You will finish according to Your will.*

Thursday December 26, 2019      READ: John 14:1-5

### Let Not Your Hearts Be Troubled

Jesus tells His disciples that we will have a forever home in Heaven if we believe in Him: believe that Jesus is the Son of God. Trust in God; trust in Jesus. We should not be troubled or worry; He will come back and get us. Jesus was preparing them for His death, but they didn’t understand yet.

This is the ultimate promise: the reason God sent His Son was so we might have everlasting life. To me, the question “How can we know the way?” is answered every time Jesus talked to the crowds. It is answered in the way He empowers our lives and conduct as believers. Faith in Him is the way to peace and joy and grace and all the gifts we receive daily from God.

Let not your hearts be troubled. This is a daily walk for me: To believe God cares about every little thing in my life. To give up and give it to God because He promised to take care of us.

It is in our very nature to try to control our lives, to plan every detail. But many times Jesus reminds me that I am not in control. When I turn to Him instead of worrying and fretting, that’s when I get peace, joy, grace.

Years ago, when my daughter was having a crisis in her life, I was so bothered by the situation that I couldn’t sleep. I would ask God to help - to do something! I finally started praying all day, and at night I would say the name of Jesus until I fell asleep. The situation didn’t change, but I did. I was able to turn the crisis over to Him and actually stop worrying. I knew He was in charge.

*Lord, when we let go and give You our troubles, You are able to change our lives. Thank You for Your wonderful plan to save us!*

*Amen.*

–Gloria Johnson

**Friday December 27, 2019**

**READ: John 4:6**

*“...and Jacob’s well was there. So, Jesus being wearied from His journey, was sitting there by the well. It was about the sixth hour.”*

We know that Jesus was present at creation and all things were made through Him and without Him nothing was made that has been made (John 1:3). In this verse we encounter God in the form of man, come down from heaven having set aside equality with God in order to live among, serve, and save His chosen ones. Here we see the Son of God, the One who separated the waters from the dry land, who created the dust He was walking upon, the stones of the well where He sat, and the water He wanted to drink to be refreshed. We see the King of kings and the Lord of lords sitting by a well. Tired and thirsty.

Almost nine years ago my daughter-in-law made a request to me. She asked me if I would be there when their baby was born. Thinking that she wanted me to be at the hospital and to help at their home, I was honored and delighted to comply. Later in the conversation it became clear that she meant she wanted me to be *IN* the birthing room when she gave birth. This was *not* what I signed up for, but I had already committed. Sometimes I think about Jesus in His humility. Was it even possible for Him to think things like that To think that all this discomfort, mocking, rejection, hunger, pain, and death on our behalf wasn’t what He signed up for?

Jesus knew the whole plan of God. We do not, but we commit to trust in Jesus, we have made the commitment to persevere in following Him. Because we know that our God is faithful to sustain us and will accomplish His good plan, we can rejoice that we committed to a life that gives us joy, honors Him, and ends in glory.

*Lord, let us remain joyfully faithful in our commitment to You especially in these increasingly dark and difficult days.*

–Laurie Hill

**Saturday December 28, 2019**

**READ: Philippians 2:9-11**

Every Knee Will Bow

Jesus Christ IS Lord. Every human being and every creature above, and on, and under this world will bow to Him when time ends. It will happen, whether we choose Him or not.

“Take his hands in your hands and pray for his itching.” Words from the Holy Spirit. My heavenly Father was telling me to take my earthly father’s hands in my hands and pray the gospel message to him and pray for healing of his 24/7, scalp to toes itching. Itching that caused my father daily pain and suffering. He scratched so hard he would make himself bleed. The doctors said he was allergic to the sun and that Agent Orange from his time in Vietnam was the culprit.

I definitely told the King of kings, “No. I am not going to take my dad’s hands in mine and pray for him, thank you very much. My family does not do that. He will reject me.”

One day my father came to visit me. We were alone together. The Holy Spirit was reminding me of my task. Well, my dad came and left and I did not do what my Father had asked me to do. I sobbed, knowing full well I had disobeyed The Name Above All Names. I begged for another chance. The Holy Spirit was relentless and eventually my knee would bow in obedience to the One who had asked me to do this very difficult task.

The day came when I found myself alone with my father. I asked softly. “Dad, can I pray for you and your itching?” He said, “Sure.” We sat at the table, his hands in mine. I prayed the gospel message to my father and I asked the Lord to please, please give him a miracle and heal his itching 100%. When we were done, my dad and I were both weeping and he said to me, “Thank you, no one has ever done that for me before.”

My dad passed away on May 10, 2010 in a car accident, roughly six months after I sat at the table and prayed with him. For months after my dad’s death I was tortured by the thought that my father had not accepted Christ as his Lord. I would often find myself crying and just asking God, “Why?” Then one night when I

lay in my bed crying about my dad's loss of a Savior, the Holy Spirit gently, yet firmly, pressed on my heart, "He knew me. He knew me." I do not know how or when, but my earthly father knew Jesus Christ and he was in heaven enjoying Him. Maybe it was my prayer six months prior? I may never know. And the prayer for a miracle of 100% healing from his itching Answered! "At the name of Jesus every knee should bow...and every tongue acknowledge that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father." I'm thankful for obeying my King that day, I'm thankful my father finally recognized his King.

*Heavenly Father, thank you for being Mighty, All Knowing, Perfect Love, Goodness, Bigger than anything we can imagine! One day we will bow! Amen!*

--Traci Crotteau

## **Jesus the Supreme**

This last week we invite you to consider Jesus' position of supremacy. The author of the New Testament Book of Hebrews goes to great lengths to demonstrate the superiority of Jesus over angels, Moses, the Old Covenant, the former priesthood. He does not dismiss these things as without value. He simply interprets these things as shadows of the reality that is Jesus Christ, the Son of God.

One day every creature will bow down and concede the supremacy of Jesus over all things. Some will exalt Him with love and joy, freely and gladly offering the praise and worship He deserves. Others will bow reluctantly, resistantly, forced to acknowledge what their own hearts are loathe to embrace, that Christ, not themselves, is God after all.

These last few readings and reflections point us to the supremacy of Christ not only over all creation but especially over the affections and concerns of the human heart. Is Jesus supreme in your life?

**Sunday December 29, 2019**

**READ: Hebrews 1:8**

His Throne Forever

The qualities that God possesses His Son, Jesus Christ, also possesses. This is what Hebrews 1:8 conveys to us as we read it. The quality of rightness along with His scepter is the Son's! The words in Hebrews 1:8 are identical to Psalm 45:6 with the difference that Christ, God's Son, is now mentioned to make readers aware that they are one and the same. How amazing that God took on human flesh to save us from sin, as mentioned in Romans 5:8, which states that God showed "His love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us."

After my mother passed it was a struggle to deal with the grief that overcame me, for I lost my best friend and confidant. She was such a huge part of my life that it left an equally huge hole in my heart that I thought would never heal. But God had different plans for me.

Over the past four years that hole is slowly diminishing in size, though I don't think it will ever disappear. He has not only brought people into my life that have become family to me, but also He has brought me into a loving relationship with Him. God is becoming my best friend and confidant to the point that He has made it easy to love Him more and more as time passes.

Faith in Him has helped me to heal and look forward to each day with joy in my heart.

*Father, I thank You for being my "All in all!" Amen!*

–Gine Meissner

**Monday December 30, 2019**

**READ: Revelation 19:1-13**

Celebrate!

Who doesn't like a good game of baseball? Or football? Even if the Minnesota Twins aren't in the running for the World Series or the Gophers don't make the Rose Bowl, I still get caught up in the excitement of the game and cheer on my favorite team (usually the underdog or Cinderella team!). Overcoming the competition can be exhilarating and is cause for celebration! But these celebrations are temporary, and when another year goes by and the Wild still aren't in the Stanley Cup finals, I'm cheering on someone else.

There are more important celebrations coming than those found in our interests and pastimes. In John 16:33, Jesus tells us that while we will have troubles in this life, we shouldn't lose hope because He has overcome the world. It's good for me to remember this when I get frustrated or can't see through to the solution, or when I forget God is bigger than the immediate circumstance. He has overcome the world.

The Book of Revelation can be a challenging read because of its metaphors and imagery. This selection records an eternal celebration. Those who love God are shouting His praises for ALL He has done. God's people and the great multitude in heaven celebrate the culmination of human history, the judgement of the wicked, and the wedding of the Lamb (Jesus) and His bride (His people). I can feel the energy for praising God in this passage, and it brings into focus Jesus' statement that He has in fact overcome the world. And that is something to really cheer about!

*Thank You, Father, for Your assurance that You have overcome the world. You are worthy of all my praise!*

–Philip Klanderud

Tuesday December 31, 2019

READ: Revelation 19:14-16

### King of Kings and Lord of Lords

My devotional writing process is simple: study related text; ask help from my Comforter to see relationships; go peacefully to sleep; wake up in the morning with all the new thoughts God's Spirit has placed there; then write a devotional.

I read all of Revelation, copying those scriptures which might relate to Revelation 19:14-15: Jesus, King of kings Who rides a white horse and leads His army to wipe out the wicked ones of earth. At 3 am I awoke from a dream and realized that I could not relate any of my personal experiences to the above scriptures. It seemed my process had failed. But then my Comforter said to me: Yes, you failed, but you can share your process and feelings from what you read, as it applied to these last four weeks and previous months.

Our grandson, Charles, suffers from colitis, developing blood clots. He was often hospitalized and in intensive care. For four months, the doctors tried everything and nothing worked. Last month his colon was removed, and now our 18 year old walks around with a waste bag permanently attached. Yet he praises God and says that this is the best he has felt in years!

Loretta and I praised God for saving Charles and giving him hope for the future, but we were really tired and out of energy. We are 79 and 81 years old. Then Loretta was diagnosed with breast cancer. Since then we have traveled 3000 miles for many appointments. By the time we got home and found the church letter assigning me a scripture, I had less than a week to write my devotional. Wow!

My three hours of reading Revelation filled me with the magnificence of Heaven and the Glory, Mercy and Love of God for his sons and daughters, among whom I number myself and Loretta.

–Chuck Flickinger

*My prayer for you is that when you find yourself out of energy, go to God's word. He promises in Rev 3:1 "Blessed is he that readeth. You will overcome and become God's child."*

Wednesday January 1, 2020

READ: Revelation 22:12-13

### Are You Prepared?

Christ's return is imminent. He has promised to reward us according to what we have done. Christ was in the beginning and is in the end.

As eternal God, Jesus Christ existed before being on the earth as a human baby. He existed before the earth was created by Him and nothing was made without Him (John 1:3).

When I hear evolutionists talk about the so called "big bang" theory that started all life as we know it, I wonder where the matter came from for it to happen? And what was there before the "big bang"? Only God has a plausible answer to this. In Genesis 1:1 it says, God created the heavens and the earth. After that He created man in His own image (Genesis 1:27a). But because man sinned God sent His son, Jesus to live among us, to seek and save the lost. We should model our life's purpose after His. Jesus died on the cross to save us from our sins as a sacrifice. Christ died that day, but then He arose from the dead and then ascended into heaven. We need to believe in God and accept His forgiveness for our sins. Are "you" ready? We need to prepare now!

*Lord, thank you for sending Jesus to us that first Christmas. We know our future depends on our relationship with you. We love you and want to serve you and only you.*

--Jim Mattson

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