

# **HOPE-FULL LIVING**

▪ Daily Devotions for Living Life to the Fullest ▪

October ▪ November ▪ December ▪ 2019

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## **Hope-Full Living Mission Statement**

To inspire God's seniors with the assurance that "This very day, I have a body, a mind, a spirit and a message—God's rejuvenating Gospel message to and through me—to share with my world, my friends and my Lord."

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TUESDAY, OCTOBER 1, 2019

# Hallowthanksmas

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This is the day that the LORD has made; let us rejoice and be glad in it.

*Psalm 118:24*

Some have proclaimed October 1 as the beginning of Hallowthanksmas—three months of fun rolled into one. A blur of holiday events fill the calendar, from Halloween parties to Thanksgiving dinners to Christmas gatherings. We could become upset with retailers marketing their merchandise or with TV networks and movie producers competing for holiday ratings. But there are plenty of ways to embrace these special days.

Through every celebration we can rejoice in the promises of God: Let's bless neighbors and friends as we share Halloween treats. Let's praise God at the Thanksgiving table for all of his blessings. Let's give and receive gifts this Christmas with great joy, celebrating God's greatest gift to us in his Son, our Savior.

*Steve Hess  
Ft. Myers, FL*

**Thank you, Father,** for so many reasons to rejoice. Help us to share our joy with others through every occasion this holiday season. Amen.

**Cheer:** Take every opportunity God gives you to share with friends the reason you are joyful.

**Read:** Psalm 118; Philippians 4:4-8

WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 2, 2019

# Autumn Alleluias

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For everything there is a season, and a time for every matter under heaven.

*Ecclesiastes 3:1*

What is your favorite season? You may choose spring for the beginning of new life or summer for the pleasantness of warm, sunny days. Some people favor the quiet calm of a snowy winter. Perhaps because I began life on a farm, I love autumn—the time of harvest. The planting of spring and the cultivation of summer come to fulfillment in fall. Tiny seeds watered by rain and warmed by the sun have produced abundantly.

God gives some of us the blessing of senior years in order to look back on the seasons of our lives and recognize the harvest of blessings he has given. We respond with songs of thankfulness and praise.

*Eileen Ritter  
Byron Center, MI*

**We thank and praise you, Lord,** for all your blessings, especially for making us your children through Jesus. Amen.

**List:** What seasonal blessings do you enjoy most? Don't forget to say, "Thank you, God."

**Read:** Psalm 147:7-11



THURSDAY, OCTOBER 3, 2019

# God's Call

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Then Jesus told his disciples, "If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me."

*Matthew 16:24*

The Bible is full of stories of Christ's calls to act. He urged sinners to repent. He challenged doubters to believe. He asked the ill and disabled to have faith in his healing power. He encouraged the hopeless to trust him. He wanted his followers to care for those who were alone, poor, in prison or suffering. He also asked people to use their talents to serve others.

Does God still ask these things of us today? We can hear his call at any age, in times of trouble or tranquility. Even a small action done can make a difference. Those who feel unworthy to do this should be encouraged by the expression, "God doesn't call the equipped. He equips the called."

*Jan Kilby  
San Antonio, TX*

**Lord**, please give me the courage to respond to your divine invitation to serve others. Amen.

**List:** Consider the blessings and talents you have that could be used to help others.

**Read:** 2 Timothy 1:8-9; 1 Peter 4:10

FRIDAY, OCTOBER 4, 2019

# Seeing Ourselves

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Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I am fully known.

*1 Corinthians 13:12*

My son came by with a set of questions to ask. What is your earliest memory? What was your favorite memory from your childhood? What chore did you least like to do? I had the answers, but the questions reminded me of many thoughtless things I did when I was a youngster.

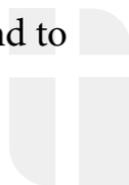
We tend to forget our weaknesses. As senior citizens, we may find some of those weaknesses reappearing. One of the characteristics of Jesus is that he knows the people he encounters. He speaks to them as people who need his compassionate thoughtfulness, as he does with the Samaritan woman at Jacob's well (John 4). He knew already that he would give his life for her, and for us, when he died on the cross. What a Lord we have!

*Gordon Beck  
Williamsburg, VA*

**Lord Jesus,** thank you for your compassionate thoughtfulness. Help me to be thoughtful today. Amen

**Reach:** Send a thoughtful message to a friend to whom you haven't spoken in a long time.

**Read:** Psalm 19



SATURDAY, OCTOBER 5, 2019

# Holding Hands

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For I the Lord your God, hold your right hand.

*Isaiah 41:13*

“I do it,” insisted the small grandson as he toddled over rocky ground. A couple of abrupt falls later, he said, “I hold your hand, Grandpa.” The man smiled at this child’s misplaced confidence and held out his hand. “You’re sure you don’t want me to hold your hand, instead?” Grandpa asked. “I’m really good at not letting go.”

“I do it,” the child insisted. A scraped knee later, the little boy eyed the very long distance still to go with a quiver to his lower lip. The grandfather said, “If I hold your hand, you will not fall. Shall we try it with me holding your hand?” Nodding, the boy slipped his little hand inside the bigger grip and together the two hobbled over the bumps. Grandfather caught the boy each time he stumbled. After the final stretch, the little boy beamed. “We did it, Grandpa!”

*Julaine Kammrath  
Aurora, IL*

**Father**, please hold on to me with your peace. Amen.

**Remember:** Recall a memory when you were aware of God’s hand not letting go.

**Read:** Psalm 73:23-26; Psalm 138:7-8

SUNDAY, OCTOBER 6, 2019

# A Unique Picture

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I will grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ.

*Ephesians 3:18*

God's people usually have a favorite Bible passage or two. Through the years that may change. Recently I added a new one on my list. It seemed appropriate for my later years. The words of the apostle Paul describe for me a unique way in which God supports me. Listen to his message:

God's love in Christ is all around me. Here is how Paul views that love. *Wide*: Jesus' arms are stretched out on Calvary's cross for me. *Long*: His love never fails me. *High*: He lifts me up in the midst of my struggles. *Deep*: His hand reaches down to take care of me.

Would you like to add this passage to your favorite list?

*Walter M. Schoedel  
Webster Groves, MO*

**Lord Jesus**, help me reach out to your extended hand that saves and sustains and supports and serves me. Amen.

**Reflect:** Ponder how God's love works in your daily pilgrimage.

**Read:** Ephesians 3:14-21



MONDAY, OCTOBER 7, 2019

# Personal Peace

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Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives.

*John 14:27*

In the film *Miss Congeniality* every contestant but Sandra Bullock said our society needs world peace the most. When she received blank stares for her answer, she changed it to “world peace.” Everyone applauded. We all desire world peace, but often our need is personal. We’re annoyed, irritated or worried; we lack peace.

Jesus bequeathed a gift—a brand of peace unfamiliar to the world. It’s the peace of his presence and character. When we embrace his peace, we exchange worry for trust, anxiety for stability and irritation for calmness. We can bring his peace in us to relationships and situations. In this season, let’s offer peace. Everyone will applaud.

*Marilyn Nutter  
Greer, SC*

**Father**, help me to exchange my troubled thoughts for your gift of peace. Amen.

**Learn:** List attitudes or circumstances that steal your peace. How can Jesus’ peace change you?

**Read:** Isaiah 26:3; 2 Thessalonians 3:16

TUESDAY, OCTOBER 8, 2019

# I Need a Melchizedek

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He is also king of Salem, that is, king of peace.

*Hebrews 7:2*

Do you remember Melchizedek? He is that mysterious king who meets Abram, blesses him and departs. He is the priest of God Most High (Genesis 14:18). Nothing more is known about him. Remember where Melchizedek is from? He is the king of Salem, an ancient name for Jerusalem. Yet Salem is more than a place name. Salem, or *shalom*, means peace. Melchizedek is not only from a place called Peace, he also brings peace.

Do you need peace? Maybe you're dealing with hard decisions that have no easy solutions. Maybe there are physical woes or mental stress. The Prince of Peace comes to you. He reminds us that we are loved and forgiven and strengthens us through his Spirit to deal with any turmoil. Melchizedek came and left. Jesus will be with us always.

*Neal A. Orabka  
N. Las Vegas, NV*

**Lord,** let me be filled with peace. Amen.

**Think:** How can I be a bringer of peace?

**Read:** Matthew 28:20



WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 9, 2019

# Mission Statement

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Even to old age and gray hairs, O God, do not forsake me, until I proclaim your might to another generation ... to all those to come.

*Psalm 71:18*

Many churches develop mission statements. Mission statements answer the question: “Why are we here?” A mission statement gives direction to the life of the local congregation.

Jesus had a mission statement: “For the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost” (Luke 19:10). Jesus wants us to know why he came: to seek and save those of us who were lost, but now are found.

We all need a mission statement, a direction for our lives in Christ. What’s yours? The psalmist had a mission statement. It gave direction to his life. His mission was to do something, regardless of age, to help the generation coming up know the Lord’s awesome goodness. Could his mission become yours?

*David Boyd  
Staunton, VA*

**Lord Jesus,** remind me again why I’m here. Amen.

**Consider:** Seek new ways to support Jesus’ mission of seeking and saving the next generation.

**Read:** Matthew 28:16-20

THURSDAY, OCTOBER 10, 2019

# Destination Peace

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He makes me lie down in green pastures, he leads me beside quiet waters, he refreshes my soul.

*Psalm 23:2*

I recently came across an old vacation photo of my family sitting in a green meadow next to a pristine pond surrounded by majestic mountains in Colorado. I recall how peaceful it was to be there. If only I could transport myself there whenever life's challenges threaten my sense of peace!

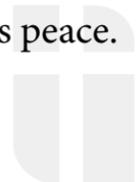
Psalm 23 offers a picture of the perfect peaceful destination. It's not just a distant memory or hopeful fantasy. God invites us daily into his presence where we can rest in his ever-fresh, living Word of comfort and hope. He leads us to quiet waters where Jesus calms waves of fear and doubt. He refreshes us through his Holy Spirit, who gives us faith to trust God, our one destination for true peace.

*Sandi Geis  
St. Louis, MO*

**Jesus,** when my heart is troubled, lead me to find peace in you. Amen.

**Recall:** Picture times you experienced God's peace. Pray he leads you there today!

**Read:** Psalm 23



FRIDAY, OCTOBER 11, 2019

# Sleepyhead?

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If you lie down, you will not be afraid; when you lie down, your sleep will be sweet.

*Proverbs 3:24*

Medical experts tell us that sleep patterns change as we age. Fragmented nights are common. Sleep quality deteriorates. Perhaps you, too, can identify with the Old Testament prophet who wrote, “When I lie down I say, ‘When shall I arise?’ But the night is long, and I am full of tossing till the dawn” (Job 7:4).

Although pharmacists offer sleep aids, the psalmist suggests a more effective solution: “I will not give sleep to my eyes or slumber to my eyelids, until I find a place for the Lord, a dwelling place for the Mighty One of Jacob” (Psalm 132:4-5). Mentally picturing “a place for the Lord” filled with images of his many blessings, will surely work better than swallowing a pill or sipping a nightcap.

*Mary Manz Simon  
Ft. Myers, FL*

**In peace** I will both lie down and sleep; for you alone, O Lord, make me dwell in safety (Psalm 4:8). Amen.

**Do:** During a restless night, list the ways God blessed you during the day.

**Read:** Jeremiah 31:26

SATURDAY, OCTOBER 12, 2019

# Peace during Storms

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Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you.

*John 14:27*

An artist painted an unusual picture of peace. The painting showed a stormy sea pounding violently against the cliff, black rain clouds all about and lightning flashing in the distance in a night of turmoil. But in a space along the cliff wall, the artist painted a small bird: warm, safe and dry in its nest. When the world seems to crash down around us, we can have peace because we are safe in the Rock, Jesus Christ our Lord. He brings protection and he enables us to be at peace. Through prayer, we can and will experience the peace that our Lord can give. Our God is the source of real inner peace. Rest in him today and every day.

*Mike Lutz  
Shelby Twp., MI*

**Father,** let me experience your peace when troubles come. Amen.

**Consider:** Spend time alone meditating on the peace that our Lord gives.

**Read:** Psalm 29



SUNDAY, OCTOBER 13, 2019

# Sharing Warmth and Light

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That you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light.

*1 Peter 2:9*

The warmth and light of the sun drew my family to a beach where my child-mind was opened to the marvelous variety of sea creatures. As my brother and I raced down to the water's edge, a horseshoe crab crawled out of the waves and very slowly moved over the wet sand. It fascinated me and opened my eyes and mind to the wonderful world of sea creatures and their unique colors, shapes and behaviors.

Followers of Jesus can share his warmth and light through simple acts of love. We can offer a “thank you” to those who help us, question a school-age cashier about his or her life goals or post a kind message on social media in support of a friend. Such simple acts help us share the warmth and light that Jesus brings.

*Pat Shopland  
Marshfield, MA*

**Lord,** lead us to simple acts of love. Amen.

**Connect:** Send a caring message to a friend by mail or social media.

**Read:** Romans 13:10

MONDAY, OCTOBER 14, 2019

# Fall Shipwreck

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And so it was that all were brought safely to land.

*Acts 27:44*

How beautiful the fall! But winter storms are coming. What winds blow in your life as storm clouds gather and powerful waves threaten to engulf your frail ship? The apostle Paul, heading to Rome as a prisoner, faced a late fall storm which threatened destruction for all 276 on board ship. For 14 days the storm raged out of control with no hope for survival.

But God was in control with his plan for Paul to proclaim the Gospel of Jesus Christ in Rome. Paul, with a prayer of thanksgiving, calmly urges everyone to eat, assuring that all will be saved on an island. That same loving Father sent Jesus to die and rise and has a purpose for you this fall and winter to share his good news with others.

*Stephen J. Carter  
Oakville, MO*

**Lord,** help me trust you amidst fearful storms so that I may bring others safely home. Amen.

**Comfort:** Be a calming voice for someone facing shipwreck!

**Read:** Acts 27



TUESDAY, OCTOBER 15, 2019

# Lord, Teach Us to Pray

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Lord, teach us to pray.

*Luke 11:1*

Prayer can comfort us as we speak personally to God. In prayer we see miracles. God hears your prayers. “You will call upon me and come and pray to me, and I will hear you” (Jeremiah 29:12).

How do I pray? Glorify God; call on him as the most holy Lord. Pray like you are talking to your Father, tell God what your concerns are. Pray simply. I have prayed “SOS” prayers like, “Lord, help me,” “Lord, I can’t do this without you” or “Lord, calm my fears.” God hears your thoughts, so pray as you think. You don’t have to be in a secluded place. Call on him: “Lord, you promise to hear my prayers; I want to try praying now.”

*Bill Biester  
Gilbert, AZ*

**Holy and everlasting Lord,** be my comfort my support, my strength and my shield. Help me to depend on you and find great joy and peace in your presence. Thank you for always loving me. In Jesus’ name. Amen.

**Pray:** Call on the Lord anytime, anywhere. He promises to hear your prayers.

**Read:** 1 Thessalonians 5:16-18; Luke 11:1-13

WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 16, 2019

# Hope-Full Living

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But those who wait for the LORD shall renew their strength.

*Isaiah 40:31*

The youngsters were seated on the chancel steps, participating in the children's message. The pastor was talking about hope and asked the kids what that word meant to them. There was a prolonged silence and finally one four-year-old lad quietly said, "If you're going to have a really bad day, you hope that it is tomorrow."

I would imagine that most of us would agree with that boy's assessment—postponing the "bad" until a later date. It doesn't have to be that way. As we hope in the Lord, we "shall mount up with wings like eagles ... run and not be weary ... walk and not faint." That is what hope-full living is all about. We have confidence in the grace and power and love of Christ to sustain us through any circumstances.

*Don Luepke  
Fremont, IN*

**Lord,** you alone grant me a hope and a future. Amen.

**Consider:** Write a devotion to share with fellow seniors through "Hope-Full Living."

**Read:** Jeremiah 29:11; Romans 15:4-6



THURSDAY, OCTOBER 17, 2019

# Bless You!

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Who was it ... and I have blessed him? Yes, and he shall be blessed.

*Genesis 27:33*

To give a blessing in biblical days was serious business. Isaac was nearing the end of his life and wanted to bless his eldest son, Esau. But with the help of his mother, Jacob deceived his aged father and Isaac gave his blessing to Jacob. Isaac blessed the wrong son; but it could not be changed. That is how enduring a blessing was.

God promises to bless you, and one such blessing is spoken at the close of a worship service: “The Lord bless you and keep you; the Lord make his face to shine upon you and be gracious to you; the Lord lift up his countenance upon you and give you peace” (Numbers 6:24-26). When God, your heavenly Father, gives that blessing to you, it cannot be changed.

*Jerrold Lloyd Nichols  
Fort Wayne, IN*

**Heavenly Father,** bless me that I might be a blessing to others. Amen.

**Ask:** Who will receive your blessing today?

**Read:** Genesis 27

FRIDAY, OCTOBER 18, 2019

# Peace Is a Relationship

---

Grace, mercy, and peace, from God the Father and from Jesus Christ.

*2 John 3*

I still remember my elementary school days, sitting in Sunday worship and hearing our pastor pronounce after his sermon, “The peace of God, which passes all understanding, keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus.” My quirky mind would sometimes whisper to me, “Well, that’s why I didn’t understand the sermon in the first place!”

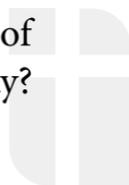
The word *peace* is much more than a word. It is a relationship between our Lord and us, begun in Baptism. In the midst of our sinful world of pain and pettiness, our Lord graces us with his mercy and love. It is not what we say or do, it is what he has already said and done and continues to do, through us. And I’m glad!

*Rich Bimler  
Bloomington, IL*

**Lord**, even when our words often do not do justice to your love and forgiveness, thanks for bringing peace into the lives of others, through us. In our Peace-Giver’s name. Amen.

**Reflect:** What specific words and examples of God’s peace can you bring to a friend this day?

**Read:** John 14:25-31; Philippians 4:4-7



SATURDAY, OCTOBER 19, 2019

# Stay Close

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You have received the Spirit of adoption as sons, by whom we cry, “Abba! Father!”

*Romans 8:15*

In rehab, I asked my therapist, “Why does it matter how I place my feet? It’s my shoulder I’m trying to improve.”

“It’s all connected,” he replied. Connections in our bodies are important, as they are in life. We try to stay connected with our children with phone calls, cards and emails when we can’t meet face to face. Most important is staying connected to our God. Prayer is great for that. Always remember that God wants a close relationship—actually kinship—with you. In fact, God sent his Son so that we might be called children of God and call him our Father.

*Eldor Kaiser  
Lenexa, KS*

**Dear Father,** forgive us and draw us close to your heart. Amen.

**Praise:** In your prayers today, remember how God your Father loves you as his child.

**Read:** Romans 8:12-17

SUNDAY, OCTOBER 20, 2019

# In God I Find Peace

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In peace I will both lie down and sleep; for you alone, O Lord, make me dwell in safety.

*Psalm 4:8*

All of us, at one time or another, have spent a restless night, tossing and turning in sleeplessness over our worries. Perhaps we can use the time we spend lying awake to pray. God is a God of compassion and faithfulness, who will never let us face our burdens alone.

Because we are human and life is challenging, we can be anxious and afraid. When we turn to the Lord with our concerns, we will be less consumed by worry and more trusting, safe in the knowledge of God's love.

As we respond to God's call to lay our worries at the feet of Jesus, we are then enabled to share our peace with others. As we learn to trust in God's providence for us, we are filled with a sense of well-being, which we can pass along to the people we meet.

*Sally Macke  
St. Louis, MO*

**Lord**, fill me with your peace so that I might share that peace with others. Amen.

**Speak:** Say the name of Jesus whenever an anxious thought creeps into you mind.

**Read:** Philippians 4:6-7



MONDAY, OCTOBER 21, 2019

# Out of Milk?

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Then I will fulfill the oath I swore to your ancestors, to give them a land flowing with milk and honey.

*Jeremiah 11:5*

My late mother-in-law was a chocoholic. In fact, her daily breakfast was a big glass of chocolate milk. When the milk jug was empty, she simply scooped up some powdered chocolate mix and ate it right off the spoon!

After 40 years in the desert, the Israelites reached the “land flowing with milk and honey” that God promised. So, when obstacles arose and the milk jug appeared empty, their faith was tested. But God reminded them that the sweetest blessings were in him alone. Likewise, when trouble threatens our faith, we can indulge in the sweetness of God’s promise found in Jesus, who, by his death and resurrection, secured our relationship with God for today and eternally in heaven where the milk and honey will never stop flowing.

*Sandi Geis  
St. Louis, MO*

**Thank you, Jesus,** for the sweetest blessing of all—everlasting life with you. Amen.

**Savor:** Start your day with a dose of Jesus’ sweet Word of peace and hope.

**Read:** Psalm 37:4; Philippians 4:12-13

TUESDAY, OCTOBER 22, 2019

# The Labyrinth

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You're my place of quiet retreat.

*Psalms 119:114*

Labyrinths have long been part of Christians' prayer and meditative lives, and I've been thinking that they also provide a microcosm of the Christian life. Following those twists and turns, getting lost and ending up in the middle anyhow, you realize the perfect design. Our Designer's plan is frequently hidden from us, but staying on the path, connecting with God in prayer, embracing the joys and sorrows that come our way, we begin to see his perfect design. New Harmony, Indiana, is a tiny town that boasts three labyrinths. I used to meet friends there for lunch, and I'd try to arrive early for a meditative walk, looking forward to the twists and turns, praying and getting happily lost. Approaching the circle on one of those occasions, I saw a young girl doing cartwheels across the surface, ignoring the path. There is a time for contemplation. And then there is a time for joy.

*Sally Beck  
Williamsburg, VA*

**O God,** give me quiet times to spend with you. Amen.

**Pray:** Walk with the Lord in prayer—or do cartwheels.

**Read:** Proverbs 16:9; John 14:1-6



WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 23, 2019

# Seeking Peace

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Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you.

*John 14:27*

Have you ever found yourself in the midst of the noise of life—the mental, emotional or physical challenges we often face? On more than one occasion, I have muttered, “I just need some peace and quiet.” Regardless of our attempts to find or manufacture peace, deep peace cannot be found in an empty room, or in a noise-free space or in a soothing melody. Deep peace is a gift to those who know and live in forgiveness found in Jesus. Our search for peace begins and ends with him: Jesus Savior, Son of God ... our peace.

*Judith Christian  
St. Louis, MO*

**Jesus, Savior,** quiet the noise in my life. Guide me to seek and find true peace, found only in the open arms of your love and forgiveness. Amen.

**Rest:** Daily set aside quiet time to meditate on, and give thanks for, the sacrificial love Jesus has for you!

**Read:** John 14:1-29

THURSDAY, OCTOBER 24, 2019

# Batter Up!

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Fear not, for I am with you; be not dismayed, for I am your God; I will strengthen you, I will help you, I will uphold you with my righteous right hand.

*Isaiah 41:10*

Imagine stepping up to the plate as the next batter in the World Series, gazing out at the pitcher who has struck out every batter who stood in that spot thus far in the game. Any fear? Life, as seniors, brings new fears, fears more intense than any baseball game. The unknown is a fearful thing.

In our fear-filled moments, Isaiah offers hope-full words: God is your God. Therefore, you can shout, “He is mine!” Because he is yours, he will pick you up when you stumble. When you feel helpless, God will send help in unexpected ways. So, whatever today brings, confidently step up to the plate and—“Batter up!” God will get you home.

*Randal Jeppeson  
Medford, WI*

**Loving Lord**, you know all my fears. Teach me to step up to each fear, confident you will lead me home. Amen.

**Remember:** Face God first; then face your fear.

**Read:** Isaiah 43:1-3; John 20:19-23



FRIDAY, OCTOBER 25, 2019

# Heaven Is Our Home

---

And Jesus said to him, "Foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay his head."

*Luke 9:58*

There's a famous pilgrimage called Camino de Santiago, from various points in Europe to Spain. You take only what you can carry and rely on the kindness of those who open their homes to feed you and give you shelter. You don't take a map but are led by shells posted along the way. Jesus' ministry was a pilgrimage to the cross. He healed, taught and fed those he met along the way. There comes a time when it's a blessing to think that we are going home to heaven. God doesn't leave us here to wander forever. We have the assurance that God has prepared a place for us.

*Nancy Rapp  
St. Louis, MO*

**Dear Lord,** lead me safely to eternal life with you and provide a way for me to bring those you place in my life to this truth as well. Amen.

**Walk:** Take a walk with pilgrimage in mind. Share what you have along the way.

**Read:** Revelation 21:3-4; John 14:2

SATURDAY, OCTOBER 26, 2019

# Cloud Pictures

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He makes the clouds his chariot and rides on the wings of the wind.

*Psalm 104:3*

Did you ever look up at the clouds when you were young, and see the shapes of animals, ships and maybe even angels? I did. Truthfully, I still do!

October can bring clouds too thick to see a giraffe or elephant. That can make us start to miss the clouds of summer with sunlight streaking through them. But the psalmist gives us a different image for October clouds today. They are the chariots of our God! Accompanying autumn winds are his wings. God fills the seasons with reminders of his presence.

Today, the Lord rides the clouds of glory to you. The wind of the Spirit is the breath of God's Son, breathing out upon you and giving you his peace.

*Don Schatz  
Kenmore, WA*

**Thank you for signs in the clouds** and wind that you alone are God, O Lord. Amen.

**Watch:** Look up at the clouds today and see the Lord's chariot!

**Read:** Psalm 104:1-19



SUNDAY, OCTOBER 27, 2019

# The Easy Yoke

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My yoke is easy, and my burden is light.

*Matthew 11:30*

In my antique browsing, I noticed a piece of timber with the lower surface hollowed out to rest on the necks of two oxen—a yoke. That brought to mind the quote above. At our age, is our yoke easy? We may be dealing with a change in location, separation from family and perhaps occasional or even constant pain. As always, we turn to Jesus. He adds, “Learn of me.”

As he teaches us, he is “gentle, lowly in heart.” He adds a promise: “You will find rest for your souls.” Does your soul need rest? Mine does—rest from the busy pace of life, from the thought of what the future may bring. Instead of letting our trials drag us down, let us look up and see Jesus’ constant, comforting presence as he walks beside us.

*Connie Bretscher  
Valparaiso, IN*

**Jesus, my Savior,** I am joined to you by faith. Let me learn from you. Amen.

**Carry:** Remember to let Jesus help with your burdens.

**Read:** Matthew 11:28-30

MONDAY, OCTOBER 28, 2019

# Wounded Healers

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Because he himself suffered when he was tempted, he is able to help those who are tempted.

*Hebrews 2:18*

There are times when our dreams fade like the morning mist. Disappointments, separations, illness and failures wound us. Satan uses these things to strike fear into our hearts. Believe Jesus when he says, “Because I live, you also will live” (John 14:19). Say to the devil, “Get thee behind me, Satan.” I am a wounded healer and I have work to do. There are wounded people for me to visit and to tell about Jesus.

On our journey we will listen to Jesus speak to us in his holy Word and as we meet him in the bread and wine of his holy meal. We will walk the Emmaus road with Jesus and invite the wounded to join us. When evening comes, we will say to Jesus, “Abide with us,” and then awake to the sunshine of God’s grace.

*Leo Symmank  
Seabrook, TX*

**Lord,** reach out to the wounded through me and other wounded healers to provide comfort and to strengthen the weak. Amen.

**Share:** Visit those who are wounded to bring comfort.

**Read:** Hebrews 2:14-18



TUESDAY, OCTOBER 29, 2019

# God Changes Not

---

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

*James 1:17-18*

Change happens! Love it or hate it, welcome it or resist it, it's inevitable. I love the changing colors of autumn, but I dread the icy months ahead. Nothing lasts forever (neither the good nor the bad); life changes, people change, we change in many ways.

Through all of this our God changes not. He is good, all the time. His gifts and promises are always valid. Through his Son, whose cross has overcome all that we dread, he has gifted us with new and eternal life. He is with us and for us, come what may. "Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts" (Colossians 3:15) and you will have the antidote to the virus of anxiety and fear.

*Paul Scheidt  
Chesterfield, MO*

**Heavenly Father,** you know the anxiety and pain that trouble me, and you know the comfort I need right now. Give me that peace of Christ, which surpasses my understanding. Amen.

**Pray:** When you feel anxious, ask God for his gift of peace.

**Read:** Colossians 3:12-17

WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 30, 2019

# A Busy Gardener

---

Behold, I am doing a new thing; now it springs forth, do you not perceive it? I will make a way in the wilderness and rivers in the desert.

*Isaiah 43:19*

I am a terrible gardener.

That's why I was delighted to see a bright orange flower smiling from the hyacinth plant this morning. As brilliantly colored as any October pumpkin, that unexpected blossom brightened my outlook.

Seeing that spritz of orange, poking from beneath yellowed leaves, was a reminder to look for God's surprises. As we age, it's easy to nestle down into comfortable places and familiar spaces. Sometimes we need a nudge—like the appearance of an orange flower—to remind us to look at what's happening around us. We read in Genesis that our Creator God rested on the seventh day, but he will surely be busy today!

*Mary Manz Simon  
Ft. Myers, FL*

**Lord God,** help me stay alert to your signs and wonders. Amen.

**Be aware:** In what ways will the Creator surprise you today?

**Read:** Lamentations 3:22-23; Isaiah 65:17



THURSDAY, OCTOBER 31, 2019

# The Kingdom's Ours

---

But the saints of the Most High shall receive the kingdom and possess the kingdom forever.

*Daniel 7:18*

Depending which version of “A Mighty Fortress Is Our God” you’re singing, the last verse ends with these or similar stirring words: “The Kingdom’s ours forever!” This hymn doesn’t sugar-coat the world’s evils, but it declares that God has won the victory and now gives to all believers an everlasting kingdom.

Daniel writes about the same kingdom after he experiences a disturbing vision of four beasts. The beasts represent four kings who will, in turn, dominate the world. The images are as unsettling as the world’s evils described in “A Mighty Fortress Is Our God.” But worldly kingdoms and evil are not forever. Both Daniel and composer Martin Luther conclude victoriously, “The Kingdom’s ours forever!” This is God’s lasting promise. And it’s a promise on which we can take a stand!

*Marj Maynard  
Pipe Creek, TX*

**Almighty Father**, thy kingdom come. Amen.

**Enjoy:** Listen to or sing your favorite version of “A Mighty Fortress Is Our God.”

**Read:** Daniel 7:13-18; Isaiah 9:7

FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 1, 2019

# Water Rises

---

You shall be like a watered garden, like a spring of water, whose waters do not fail.

*Isaiah 58:11*

A memorial service for a young woman ended with mourners coming to the front, taking a smooth stone from a dish, holding it and speaking, and then dropping the stone into a beautiful clear vase half filled with water. Each time the assembly said, “And the water rises.” This had many meanings for different people, but to me it was the joining of love and memories of the loved one. Seeing the water rise, filling the vase, we remember how we had been filled in knowing her.

As water refreshes, washes, cools and sustains us, so do the memories and love that we share revitalize our lives. God’s gifts to us have often come to us through water. Baptismal washing, the refreshing cup given, water turned to wine, and now, the wine of the Holy Communion.

*Gail Lutze  
Valparaiso, IN*

**Dear Lord,** we come to you, knowing we need your water of redemption. Amen.

**Reflect:** Reflect on the gift of water, the gift of life and how you rise with God’s gifts.

**Read:** John 13:1-17



SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 2, 2019

# A Heart at Peace

---

A heart at peace gives life to the body, but envy rots the bones.

*Proverbs 14:30*

Peace built on what is around us is too fragile to last long. There's too much trouble that undermines it. Lasting peace must come from within, but our hearts are poisoned by sin.

Jesus offers us a peace the world cannot give. It's a peace built on his death which overcomes and forgives the sin in our heart, a peace based on a reconciled relationship with our loving heavenly Father. With faith in Jesus, this peace trumps all the problems of life and gives new life to our whole being. The Holy Spirit can focus your faith on this true peace and help you deal successfully with the troubles you must endure. Open your heart to his voice and be at peace today.

*Paul Scheidt  
Chesterfield, MO*

**Open the eyes of my faith, Lord,** to see and receive your gift of peace that flows from the cross of Jesus. Amen.

**Listen:** Hear the Lord's voice today as you learn from his Word—and be at peace.

**Read:** 2 Thessalonians 3:16; John 16:33

SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 3, 2019

# Grab and Go

---

Let me hear in the morning of your steadfast love, for in you I trust. Make me know the way I should go.

*Psalms 143:8*

By your entryway, you may keep bins under a bench for grab-and-go items. What will you need that day—an umbrella, hat or sunscreen lotion? You don't want to dash out the door without it!

We should also keep spiritual grab-and-go bins. Let's start each day grabbing what we need to live each moment as God's loving servants. Humility will help us accept others' suggestions for family gatherings, prayer services or food drives. When we are sick, or if we are caregivers, we'll need the Holy Spirit's gift of fortitude to patiently endure physical and emotional challenges. Our needs may be different each day, but every day, let's choose joy and toss worrying in the trash bin! No need to fear. We can cling to God and go!

*Catherine A. Welch  
Southbury, CT*

**Loving God**, help me trust you. Send me out with peace in my heart. Amen.

**Go:** Set up an entryway grab-and-go bin and pray about the spiritual gifts you need to grab for the day!

**Read:** Romans 15:13; James 1:17

MONDAY, NOVEMBER 4, 2019

# We Make a Difference

---

And a harvest of righteousness is sown in peace by those who make peace.

*James 3:18*

It is easy to despair over all the violence in our world. In the face of hatred and war, we might feel powerless to do anything. We might believe that our actions as individual human persons do not count.

But they do. Every act of kindness, every smile of good cheer, has a ripple effect of goodness that goes out into the world, sending a message of peace. Every expression of concern over another's well-being, every thoughtful gesture, transforms the world around us.

As Mother Teresa said, "We cannot all do great things. But we can do small things with great love." We are the seeds of peace that God has planted in our world. We are called to blossom, grow and spread the gift of peace by our thoughts, words and actions.

*Sally Macke  
St. Louis, MO*

**Lord Jesus,** help me to sow seeds of peace in the world. Amen.

**Consider:** Write down one small thing you can do to make a difference.

**Read:** Galatians 6:9-10

TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 5, 2019

# Good Advice

---

I want to know Christ—yes, to know the power of his resurrection.

*Philippians 3:10*

In my readings, I ran across a teacher's advice for her students: "Laugh and play and dash about as much as you like, but be ever so careful not to do anything that would be displeasing to God." Such advice prompted me to offer my aging peers this advice: "Smile and enjoy each day. Do have a purpose for living. Keep active. But do not forget God and what he has done for you in Jesus Christ."

Jesus came to earth for you. He died and rose again to save you from your sins. He calls you to live as one of his precious sons or daughters. He invites you to await his return, when he will restore all things.

*Walter M. Schoedel  
Webster Groves, MO*

**Heavenly Father,** may your way of salvation be my way of living with Jesus. Amen.

**Plan:** Live out your role in God's story as he leads you.

**Read:** Philippians 3:10-14



WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 6, 2019

# Mustard Seeds and Mountains

---

If you have faith like a grain of mustard seed, you will say to this mountain, "Move from here to there," and it will move, and nothing will be impossible for you.

*Matthew 17:20*

While Jesus was on a *mountaintop* with three disciples, the other nine, in his absence, had been unable to relieve a young boy of a demon that had been trashing his life. After dispatching the demon, instantly healing the boy, Jesus teaches his followers that this work is not about correct magical spells but about faith, or trust. Trust is about a relationship. It is not about having a franchise for dramatic demonstrations. Faith "like a grain of mustard seed" is the intimate connection between you and the game-changing, mountain-moving authority of Jesus. As you age, what used to appear as mustard seeds starts looking like mountains. But you and Jesus are one. Those mountains will move.

*Mike May  
Kansas City, KS*

**Lord Jesus,** bind me to you in faith and love. Stand me up to the mountains I encounter today. Amen.

**Ask:** In prayer, focus on a mountain confronting you. Then ask God to get that mountain moving!

**Read:** Matthew 17:14-20

THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 7, 2019

# Half Empty or Half Full?

---

You open your hand; you satisfy the desire of every living thing.

*Psalm 145:16*

We are all familiar with the old query about the glass that is half full. When we look at a glass that is half full, do we see the half that is empty or do we see the half that is full? The way we see the glass is completely by individual choice and the way we answer the question speaks clearly about our perspective on life itself.

When we see our reflections in the mirror, what do we see? Do we see wrinkles and greying hair, or do we see people who have been blessed with a long life by our heavenly Father? If we select the second answer, we most definitely have a grateful heart. The hearts and minds that respond to God's goodness are overflowing with joy.

*Pat Shopland  
Marshfield, MA*

**Heavenly Father,** give me a grateful heart and help me to see your blessings in my life, yesterday, today and tomorrow. Amen.

**Reflect:** Prepare a list of the blessings you received from God so far this year.

**Read:** Psalm 150



FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 8, 2019

# Life According to Lists

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“Behold, I have prepared my dinner ... everything is ready; come to the wedding feast.” But they paid no attention and went their way.

*Matthew 22:4-5*

From the moment we wake up, we begin planning our day. We make mental, or perhaps written, lists. There is nothing wrong with lists, but the wedding banquet is not always a priority.

Our list reflects our priorities. For what we have made room? Where is God on our list? Do we purposefully add him? Does he find room with us, or is our available time taken with other activities? We may give him limited space, just not the space and time he desires with us.

Let's learn to create space, to sit in silence and declutter our minds, to tune out the world (TV, internet, phones) to talk to our Lord and to read and memorize his Word. Put him at the top of the list!

*Barbara Arnold  
Irvine, CA*

**Almighty Father,** we long for your continued presence. Amen.

**Ask:** How often is God my number one priority?

**Read:** Luke 14:15-24; Micah 6:8

SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 9, 2019

# Garbage Man

---

As far as the east is from the west, so far has he removed our transgressions from us.

*Psalm 103:12*

You haul your garbage out, but just before the garbage truck arrives, you grab your trash and rush back into the house. Who would ever do that?

Think of a time when you were carrying a heavy load of guilt. You asked God to forgive you and you felt relief. But the next day, the guilt was back. What happened? You took the garbage out and then you carried it back into your heart.

David, in our psalm, tells us to take the garbage out and leave it there. “As far as the east is from the west,” that’s how far God wants you to distance yourself from the guilt of your mistakes. That’s how far he distances himself from our sin and guilt. Your Father says, “Bring it to me; walk away, and don’t look back.”

*Randal Jeppesen  
Medford, WI*

**Caring Savior**, thank you for carrying all the garbage to the cross in my place. Teach me to trust that you have it all under control. Amen.

**Recall:** When you see a garbage truck, remind yourself of God’s wonderful forgiveness.

**Read:** Psalm 103; Isaiah 1:18



SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 10, 2019

# Blessed!

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Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted.

*Matthew 5:4*

A friend is going through a very difficult time right now. His wife is in hospice care and it appears that the end is very near. Even so, he said that God has a way of making his presence felt.

“I couldn’t sleep the other night,” he said. “I got up and went into the kitchen for a cup of coffee. I just wanted to stand alone in the dark while the coffee was brewing and think about my wife of so many years. I took a cup down from the shelf and poured the coffee. Halfway through drinking it, I noticed the cup. She gave me that cup a long time ago when I was having a rough time. There was just one word on it: *Blessed*. In that moment I felt she was with me ... and so was Jesus.”

*Edward Arle  
St. Charles, MO*

**Lord Jesus,** Help me to see the gladness that comes in you and help me to share that with others. Amen.

**Share:** Weep with those who weep and laugh with those who laugh.

**Read:** Matthew 5:1-12

MONDAY, NOVEMBER 11, 2019

# Lasting Peace

---

Nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war anymore.

*Isaiah 2:4*

On this day we honor all of our veterans, especially those who sacrificed their lives to preserve our precious freedoms. The “war to end all wars,” World War I, ended 101 years ago. But that peace agreement brought no lasting peace. A century later, the world is still plagued by wars and conflicts.

Isaiah’s prophecy of a time when wars will cease was partially fulfilled in the coming of the Prince of Peace. By faith in Christ, we possess that peace which the world cannot give—the peace that comes from knowing we are fully forgiven and knowing where we will spend eternity. The ultimate fulfillment of Isaiah’s prophecy will come at the end of time, when we will be raised to a new and eternal life with our Lord, and will enjoy his perfect peace forever.

*Gil Duchow  
Muskego, WI*

**Prince of Peace**, fill us with the joy and peace that only you can give. Amen.

**Assure:** Share the assurance of Christ’s pardon and peace with someone who is anxious or troubled.

**Read:** Isaiah 2:2-5; John 14:25-27

TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 12, 2019

# You've Got a Friend

---

You are my friends ... You did not choose me, but I chose you.

*John 15:14-16*

There is nothing else quite like a good friend. A true friend is a person you can trust and confide in and who will always be there for you. In our later years, we smile as we reminisce about good friends who have been a blessing in our lives over the years. We thank God for them.

As we grow older, we lose friends when the Lord takes them home to be with him. However, we still have our very best friend, Jesus Christ. He promised that he will be with us now and forever in the new home that he has prepared for us. We need never feel alone because, as Carole King's popular song says, "You've got a friend."

*Chuck Conner  
Festus, MO*

**Lord,** thank you for the dear friends you have placed into my life and for being my friend forever. Amen.

**Praise:** Sing the hymn, "What a Friend We Have in Jesus."

**Read:** John 15:12-17

WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 13, 2019

# Counting Hairs

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Even the hairs of your head are all numbered.

*Matthew 10:30*

Beauticians, barbers and stylists do their best, but it's almost impossible to completely hide age-related changes. The texture, color, strength and thickness can change our hair dramatically through the years. It's understandable that some older adults fear such obvious signs of aging.

Yet Jesus stays on top of it all. In the middle of sending out his twelve disciples, Jesus reminds them and us that he's aware of the little things that happen. How comforting to be reminded that "even the hairs of your head are all numbered."

Those familiar words of Scripture take on fresh relevance during this season of life. At age 70, 90 or 100, our Savior knows us. He understands our concerns. He values us for who we are. What a message of assurance and hope.

*Mary Manz Simon  
Ft. Myers, FL*

**Thank you, Jesus,** for recognizing my needs, knowing how to help me and always loving me. Amen.

**Do:** Identify one person today who needs to be reminded that Jesus cares about them.

**Read:** Isaiah 46:4



THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 14, 2019

# Lord of Peace

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Now may the Lord of peace himself give you peace at all times.

*2 Thessalonians 3:16*

Do you remember the story of Jesus and his disciples when they were in the boat while a huge storm took place (Matthew 8:23-27)? Can you picture the calm that Jesus created when he caused the storm to stop? The disciples were so amazed because Jesus was so calm and peaceful. At times we are like the disciples who panicked over the huge storm. We worry and lose control of our thoughts. We forget to rely on Jesus, who is the Author of all peace. If we don't have peace, we will never enjoy life as God intended. The Lord of peace wants to give us peace that affects our way of life as seniors. The best peace is the peace that comes from God. The God of peace wants his church to be a church of peace. The Lord of peace requires peace, calls for it and gives his believers the gift of peace.

*David Bever  
Las Vegas, NV*

**Jesus,** help me to find true peace from you. Amen.

**Find peace:** Receive forgiveness, accept people the way they are and place your trust in God.

**Read:** 1 Peter 3:11; Matthew 5:9

FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 15, 2019

# His Amazing Design

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Who among all these does not know that the hand of the Lord has done this? In his hand is the life of every living thing.

*Job 12:9-10*

Do you ever watch ants crawling in lines over and around each other, looking chaotic? Yet ants can actually organize to accomplish amazing tasks! Some ants can carry 5,000 times their body weight. Fire ants can build bridges and rafts out of their own bodies, sometimes holding together for months!

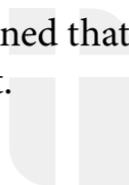
An ant colony demonstrates God's design for peace, not confusion. He equips us with the knowledge and skills that allow us to work together and serve one another. He brings his peace to impossible—and confusing—situations.

*Lisa Heule  
Littleton, CO*

**My Savior,** thank you for providing a fascinating world for our habitation. Amen.

**Wonder:** Name aloud something God designed that you find amazing and that gives you comfort.

**Read:** Jeremiah 17:7-8; Psalm 102:25



SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 16, 2019

# So Forgetful

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I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more.

*Jeremiah 31:34*

What have you forgotten recently? Where you parked your car? Where you put your glasses? Where you were to go? Why you went to the garage or basement or upstairs? Well, you get the point. We all forget things!

But take heart! You are in good company. God is forgetful. Through the prophet Jeremiah, the Lord *reminds* us that he will remember our sins no more. At the same time, there are certain things we must never forget about our loving Lord. Remember he is merciful. Remember he is kind. Remember he is your counselor. Remember he is compassionate. Remember he was your sin-substitute. Remember he paid the ransom price for you. And remember what the Lamb of God said about his Supper the night before he was sacrificed: “Do this in remembrance of me.”

*Jerrold Lloyd Nichols  
Fort Wayne, IN*

**Gracious God,** I thank you that you are a God who forgets my sinful life. Amen.

**Remember:** You are called to forgive and forget, as God does for you.

**Read:** Psalm 51

SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 17, 2019

# Peace and Age

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Even to your old age and grey hairs I am he, I am he who will sustain you.

*Isaiah 46:4*

The Lord brings peace to all of his people, of every age. For example, a recent study shows that people who have more birthdays live longer! Recently, a 103-year-old was asked how long he planned to live. He replied, “At least to 104, because very few people die between 103 and 104!”

With age comes wisdom, wit and peace. Wisdom, because we’ve “been there, done that”; wit, because we have learned that it is best to laugh at ourselves before someone else does; and peace, because we know that it is the Lord’s presence and love that gifts us another day of grace, in him.

*Rich Bimler  
Bloomington, IL*

**Lord of the young and the old**, continue to bring wisdom, wit and peace to us so that we may share your gifts with the younger around us. In Jesus’ name. Amen.

**Act:** Talk to some young people this week and let them know that peace and age are all the rage!

**Read:** Psalm 71

MONDAY, NOVEMBER 18, 2019

# Building Blocks

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You yourselves like living stones are being built up as a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood.

*1 Peter 2:5*

A house is made up of many materials—wood, plastics, metals, bricks, concrete or clay. Depending on where you are, mud, rocks and even twigs and leaves may be used. Each material fills its particular purpose.

Most building materials are unseen in the finished product, but the house couldn't stand without them. So it is for those of us who make up the Church. We are designed to fulfill our particular purpose in the body of Christ. What part do you play? Do you bake cookies? Do you pray for the service? Do you stand at the door to welcome worshipers? Stand firm where you are placed.

*Lynne Waite Chapman  
Fort Wayne, IN*

**Father**, thank you that every believer has a part to play in your kingdom. Help me see my part. Amen.

**Pray:** Ask God to show you where he has designed you to serve.

**Read:** Ephesians 2:19-22; 1 Corinthians 3:9

TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 19, 2019

# Tumbleweed Thoughts

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Return, O my soul, to your rest; for the Lord has dealt bountifully with you.

*Psalm 116:7*

Sometimes thoughts roar through our head like a pack of tumbleweeds. The more years we pack on, the more tumbleweeds we gather. Our anxiety rises if we think we are under God's frowning disapproval. Not so. Your Father in heaven loves you, and claims you as his own. You bring him joy. The psalmist, in Psalm 116, appears troubled by some "tumbleweed thoughts" himself. His fears and resentments are tumbling uncontrolled all over each other. Two things bring him back to ground: one, he focuses on all the Lord's benefits to him, and two, he takes his praise and thanks to his community of believers. That's a recipe for blowing those tumbleweeds out of town!

*Mike May  
Kansas City, KS*

**Lord**, you master my fears. Let me see clearly your benefits to me that I may return to rest. Amen.

**Write:** Jot down some of the Lord's benefits to you and tell a friend.

**Read:** Psalm 116



WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 20, 2019

# A Party for God

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Make a joyful noise to the Lord, all the earth! Serve the Lord with gladness! Come into his presence with singing!

*Psalm 100:1-2*

The Scripture lesson in church was the story of the prodigal son. The pastor suggested that the party given by the father was not for the returning son, but for himself. When I learned I would be a grandparent for the first time, I was so excited that I wanted to tell everyone. I wanted to celebrate—to celebrate that I would be a grandparent. I would have the joys of watching my son's child grow. This joy is repeated with each new child.

The father of the lost son was so overjoyed he could not contain it; he had to share it! Not even the returning son could understand it. God rejoices over our returning. Do others know how joyful you are for the blessings God has given you? Tell everyone and watch that joy grow. Rejoice as God rejoices with you.

*Gail Lutze  
Valparaiso, IN*

**Lord**, thank you for rejoicing over me in love. Lead me to share the good news of Jesus. Amen.

**Count:** Forget counting sheep. Count your blessings and sing for joy!

**Read:** Luke 15:11-32

THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 21, 2019

# God's Face Book

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I have seen God face to face.

*Genesis 32:30*

Do you have a Facebook account? Many of us do, even the “older generation.” It is a fun way to stay in touch with family and friends.

Jacob saw God face-to-face. He wrestled with God and survived! Jacob named that place *Peniel* because he saw God and lived to tell about it (Genesis 32:30). Today, he might post that on Facebook. God has a Face Book—the Bible. We see God on every page. Look at Jesus, you see God. God is an open book—he loves you, delights over you and sings a song about you. In the Bible, we see God’s determination to love us at all costs—even the cost of his Son.

Want to see the Lord? Open the Scriptures!

*Don Schatz  
Kenmore, WA*

**Thank you, Lord,** for the joy of seeing you in your Scriptures. Amen.

**Rejoice:** Praise God today that you see him in Jesus.

**Read:** John 3:1-3



FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 22, 2019

# On Eagles' Wings

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I carried you on eagles' wings and brought you to myself.

*Exodus 19:4*

A baby eagle in the sky fluttered and fell toward the rock below. Suddenly, the mother eagle swooped down below the baby and caught it on her back. She flew higher and then dropped the baby. This time the male eagle caught the baby eagle on his back. The parent eagles were teaching the young eagle to fly.

Sometimes we are afraid to try our wings as we face new challenges. We are frozen with the fear of failure. God offers us new challenges as he calls us to serve the needs of others. Our heavenly Father watches over us and spreads his wings beneath us. He who loved us enough to send his Son to die for us will not forsake us in our earthly flights. So, fly with wings like eagles; the Lord will lift you up on angels' wings.

*Leo Symmank  
Seabrook, TX*

**Dear Father,** give us the faith to believe and the commitment and strength to serve you by serving the needs of others. Amen.

**Reflect:** Ask God to bring to mind others whom you might serve and support.

**Read:** Romans 8:31-39

SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 23, 2019

# All Aboard

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For he will command his angels concerning you to guard you in all your ways.

*Psalm 91:11*

Ever since I was a young child, I have always found trains fascinating. The sound of the whistle off in the distance often made me curious about the train's destination and the people on board.

As Christians, our lives resemble trains. We are all riding the same train, heading for the same destination with Christ as our conductor. Along our ride, many passengers board our car and travel many miles with us along our journey. However, some may only travel for a short distance and then exit the car. But Christ is with us throughout the entire trip. He was with us when we began our journey and will accompany us to our last stop!

*Betsy Becker Niedringhaus  
Ballwin, MO*

**Dear heavenly Father,** remind me that you are always with me throughout my travels in life. Amen.

**Reflect:** Which travelers along your journey have made an impact in your life?

**Read:** Psalm 91



SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 24, 2019

# Living in the Future

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Forget the former things; do not dwell on the past. See, I am doing a new thing.

*Isaiah 43:18-19*

Rearview mirrors are small, but windshields are large. That's so you can look where you are going, not where you have been.

As we age, we tend to look back to a time when life was more pleasant and less fearful. We can't live in the past, however; we must live toward the future, and we can do so hopefully, not fearfully, for our God is there for us with blessings more than we can number.

Imagine a cross on your rearview mirror and on your windshield. The Savior who died for you is the one who lives for you, holding your future securely in his hands. As Philippians 4:7 assures us, "The peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus." That is a hope-full promise that calms our fears.

*Paul Scheidt  
Chesterfield, MO*

**Lord Jesus,** help me trust my whole future to your loving care. Amen.

**Watch:** Look to the future and the ways in which the Lord will provide for you.

**Read:** Jeremiah 29:10-14; Ecclesiastes 7:10

MONDAY, NOVEMBER 25, 2019

# Flipping Hearts

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And I will give you a new heart, and a new spirit I will put within you. And I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh.

*Ezekiel 36:26*

Many people enjoy flipping houses. They buy old homes to repair and resell. This requires their having a creative vision of what the structures could be and investing time and money to achieve it.

God is also in the business of flipping, but it is hearts he changes. He helps young and old alike whose hearts have been hardened by losses or mistakes. God's grace and mercy soften their hearts and restore their faith. To reach them, God often works through their caring parents, grandparents, pastors and others. These individuals can encourage them by offering assistance and sharing how God helped them handle challenges.

*Jan Kilby  
San Antonio, TX*

**Dear Lord,** help me communicate to the despairing that with your help we are not the sum of our sorrows but of our hopes. Amen.

**Reach out:** Share the promise of God's blessings to those in need of it.

**Read:** John 14:27; Psalm 34:18



TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 26, 2019

# Holding It Together

---

And he is before all things, and in him all things hold together.

*Colossians 1:17*

During tough times, sometimes it's all we can do just to hold it together. We may feel like the world is crumbling around us and too many things are simply out of control. In this critical and painful state of mind and body, we may indeed not be able to hold it together. But God in Christ Jesus can and does hold all things together.

When the world is out of control, we remember: "He upholds the universe by the word of his power" (Hebrews 1:3). When our life is falling apart, we declare: "Nevertheless, I am continually with you; you hold my right hand" (Psalm 73:23). Jesus was with God before the world began. Through him all things were created, and even now he holds all things together. That includes each one of us.

*Marj Maynard  
Pipe Creek, TX*

**Lord Jesus,** thank you for the power of your Word that holds my world and life together. Amen.

**Let go:** Instead of trying to hold it together, try allowing Jesus to hold it together for you.

**Read:** Colossians 1:15-23

WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 27, 2019

# Peaceable

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Remind the people ... to be peaceable.

*Titus 3:1-2*

Peace. It's a good word. It's an even better reality. Jesus, Prince of Peace, created peace between us and God. Start there today. Your God loves you. He placed his peace to guard your heart. Remember Jesus, appearing to his disciples on the first Easter, and breathing peace upon them? Just so, the Spirit of God's peace lives in you.

St. Paul invited Pastor Titus to remind the people he served to be peaceable. They were not to just act peaceably. They were to be peaceable. This marks us as the children of God. We live out our peace with God by being peaceable with those around us. That can take practice. God practices peace with us. We practice peace with him by being peaceable.

*Don Schatz  
Kenmore, WA*

**Lord Jesus,** make me an instrument of your peace.  
Amen.

**Practice:** Say, "Peace be with you," to at least one person today.

**Read:** John 20:19-23



THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 28, 2019

# Don't Forget

---

Forget not all his benefits.

*Psalm 103:2*

The fourth Thursday in November is America's Thanksgiving celebration. It is a tradition that is only 70 years old. Today our society sees it as a day for family, food and feasting, friends and football.

God's people may celebrate that way, but in their celebration they do not forget what God in addition provides for them. They ponder the words of the psalmist: "God forgives our sins, heals our diseases, redeems our life from hell, crowns our life with love and mercy, and surrounds our life with good things" (Psalm 103:3-5).

Therefore, I pause this day and, in fact, every day during my life's journey, to thank God for all his blessings. I join the psalmist in confessing: "Oh give thanks to the Lord, for he is good, for his steadfast love endures forever!" (Psalm 106:1).

*Walter M. Schoedel  
Webster Groves, MO*

**Thank you, Lord,** for all that you do for me to enrich my pilgrim journey. Amen.

**Praise:** Write a psalm that expresses a list of blessings that God has bestowed upon you.

**Read:** Psalm 103

FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 29, 2019

# Things to Ask For

---

One thing have I asked of the Lord, that will I seek after.

*Psalm 27:4*

The psalmist has one primary request of the Lord. There are many important things we could ask our Lord for, such as forgiveness, a strong faith, help with our daily needs or the needs of others.

The psalmist's foremost prayer is to live with the Lord all the days of his life (Psalm 27:4). He then shares some of the blessings we receive when we live each day by faith in our Lord. We are blessed to be able to call on him in the day of trouble, to know that he shelters us from harm and danger, and to come to his house of worship, where we joyfully "sing and make melody to the Lord" (Psalm 27:6). Above all, we believe that we shall see "the goodness of Lord in the land of the living," both here and hereafter (Psalm 27:13).

*Gil Duchow  
Muskego, WI*

**Gracious Lord,** grant us the grace and faith to dwell with you all the days of our life and forevermore. Amen.

**Ponder:** Think about some of the important things you could ask God for, and then ask him.

**Read:** Psalm 27



SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 30, 2019

# Don't Back Away

---

Abraham answered and said, "Behold, I have undertaken to speak to the Lord, I who am but dust and ashes."

*Genesis 18:27*

A friend asked me to feed her timid, furry black-and-white cat while she was away. For days, Maggie kept a safe distance from me. If I reached out my hand or took one step in her direction, she darted away from me.

Maggie's meek countenance reminded me of the times I back away from God instead of finding ways to become more intimate with him. My gentle Provider wants me to come to him but doesn't force it. He patiently waits with compassion until I ask for his touch. He wants to share his comfortable home with me, if I will just trust him to carry me in!

*Lisa Heule  
Littleton, CO*

**Lord**, thank you for waiting for me even when I am too shy to approach you. Amen.

**Imagine:** Picture Jesus with his arms outstretched toward you, and your response.

**Read:** James 4:8; Hebrews 10:39

SUNDAY, DECEMBER 1, 2019

# Be an Adventophile

---

Be strong and let your heart take courage; wait for the LORD!

*Psalm 27:14*

The season of Advent is precious to many of us; we are called Adventophiles! We love the traditions, the smells, the sounds, the images and the waiting. Waiting is what Advent is about. The term Advent comes from the Latin word *adventus*, meaning coming. Something is coming and we are waiting!

God sent John to prepare the way for the coming of the promised Messiah. Early believers did not know what kind of Messiah to expect, although they most likely had heard the prophecies of Isaiah and the other prophets. Today we have the advantage of knowing it is Jesus for whom we are waiting, but we still are like little children as we count off the days until Christmas. Fall in love with Advent this season. Wallow in the waiting as we worship our Christ, the newborn king!

*Margaret Rickers Hinchey  
Englewood, CO*

**Lord Jesus**, come into our hearts this season. Help us to love the waiting. Amen.

**Count:** Use an Advent calendar to help you to count down the days until Christmas.

**Read:** Mark 1:1-8; Isaiah 40:1-11



MONDAY, DECEMBER 2, 2019

# From My Place to Yours

---

Do not be afraid, Mary; you have found favor with God. You will conceive and give birth to a son, and you are to call him Jesus.

*Luke 1:30-31*

During the Christmas season, we may feel the anxiety of selecting the perfect, special gift for someone we love. We hope that the recipient will feel just like us, seeing the gift as something that is perfect and truly appreciated. Disappointment can arise if the gift is not received as we had hoped.

It is difficult to imagine what Mary felt when an angel from God announced she would be the mother of the Savior. But it was God who sent the angel, it was God who selected Mary and it was God who completed his plan to give us a Savior, a Savior who ensures us that we will have eternal life with him. Oh, what a Gift!

*Don Hollmann  
Ballwin, MO*

**Dear Savior,** your forever perfect gift to everyone is your perfect love. May we always remember your love for us. Amen.

**Reflect:** As you open Christmas packages, remember God's gift to you.

**Read:** Luke 1

TUESDAY, DECEMBER 3, 2019

# Advent Ready

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And then they will see the Son of Man coming in a cloud with power and great glory.

*Luke 21:27*

In Advent, we are waiting and preparing to celebrate the birth of our Lord—a Lord who will also return to us one day. Joyful Advent songs speak of Jesus' birth. They also speak of Jesus' Second Coming.

Such a hymn is “Wake, Awake, for Night Is Flying,” written by Philipp Nicolai, a German Lutheran pastor. In 1597, plague broke out in his area of Germany. In just one week, 170 parishioners died. Yet Nicolai did not despair, but wrote words and music expressing his trust in God in the midst of tragedy and loss. The hymn ends with a magnificent picture of heaven.

*Donna J. Streufert  
South Bend, IN*

**Lord**, this Advent keep me focused not only on the beauty of your birth, but also on your certain coming. Amen.

**Ponder:** How might I describe my relationship with Jesus?

**Read:** Matthew 24:36-44



WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 4, 2019

# Recognized

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The ox knows its owner, and the donkey its master's crib.

*Isaiah 1:3*

Christmas cards may show oxen, donkeys and sheep gathered at the manger to worship the Christ Child. The verse from Isaiah may refer to the animals in Bethlehem, but the prophet is not really describing a pretty Christmas scene. It is an unflattering comparison between God's people and the beasts. Even donkeys and oxen recognize the hand that feeds them, but God's rebellious people did not recognize their Lord.

Often our busy Christmas schedules keep us from acknowledging the holy infant in the manger. We are distracted with planning and decorating, shopping and entertaining. Take time to gather with the shepherds, the angels and the friendly beasts. Come to the manger and recognize there the Lord of heaven and earth, who came to die and rise to make you his own.

*Carol Geisler  
Manchester, MO*

**Lord Jesus**, as we gather at the manger, lead us to worship you as Lord of lords. Amen.

**Praise:** When you see a nativity scene, take a moment to offer up a prayer of thanks to Christ.

**Read:** Isaiah 1:1-3, 18; Luke 2:1-7

THURSDAY, DECEMBER 5, 2019

# The Way of Peace

---

To guide our feet into the way of peace.

*Luke 1:79*

Are you at peace in this holiday season of the year? You have worked hard to achieve peace in your senior years by building financial security and finding the right place to live with less worries. Yet, do you still struggle with a troubled world and worries in your daily life, including preparation for Christmas?

The priest Zechariah has a message for you: John the Baptist will prepare God's people through repentance for the promised Messiah, the Dayspring from on high, who will "guide our feet into the way of peace." This Prince of Peace, soon to be born in Bethlehem, will restore true peace by his death on the cross. Through faith in Jesus, we walk in the way of peace and invite others to join us now and forever. No matter your circumstances, rest in his peace each day.

*Stephen J. Carter  
Oakville, MO*

**Lord,** thanks for your saving peace. Amen.

**Ask:** Pray that God would guide your feet into your way of peace this week.

**Read:** Luke 1:62-79; Romans 5:1-8



FRIDAY, DECEMBER 6, 2019

# Busy, Busy, Busy

---

Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will.

*Romans 12:2*

The planning, purchasing and rushing all around in preparation for Christmas can become overwhelming. It creates anxiety and exhaustion, all which may lead to a feeling there is no one around to help. This lack of assistance may lead to hard feelings between loved ones and an absence of the reason for the Christmas period.

The humble birth of God's Son is for us to celebrate calmly and with thankfulness. He has given us a Savior, who came to give us eternal life. Our reason for the season, Jesus, could be lost with all the busyness we place on ourselves as we attempt to please everyone. Instead, praising God is our first priority.

*Don Hollmann  
Ballwin, MO*

**Heavenly Father,** help us to keep our focus on your Son's birth during our preparations for Christmas. Amen.

**Stay calm:** Jesus is the reason for the season. Let us celebrate!

**Read:** Colossians 3:15

SATURDAY, DECEMBER 7, 2019

# Pure Peace

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The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want.

*Psalm 23:1*

The other day, a container of body wash on the shelf of a local retail store caught my eye. The scent was named “Pure Peace.” The description read, “Turn your shower into the kind of escape you need right now.” That sounded lovely to me. It started me thinking: Where do I find peace?

Psalm 23 describes our relationship with God as sheep with their Shepherd, who leads, feeds and guides us. What peace that picture brings! The apostle Paul closes one of his letters with this benediction: “Now may the Lord of peace himself give you peace at all times in every way” (2 Thessalonians 3:16). As we celebrate the holidays, we can look to our God in thanks for giving us his peace through his Son, our Savior, Jesus Christ.

*Steve Hess  
Ft. Myers, FL*

**Thank you, Father,** for the peace you give us. Help us to share your peace with others through every occasion this holiday season. In Jesus’ name we pray. Amen.

**Share:** Have a conversation with a friend about the peace God brings.

**Read:** Psalm 23:1-3; 2 Thessalonians 3:16-18



SUNDAY, DECEMBER 8, 2019

# Best Friends

---

God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

*Romans 5:8*

As holiday cards and letters, emails and texts begin to fill the mailbox and social media, your thoughts will likely drift to numerous times, places and friends that have blessed your life. What a joy that the baby baptized beside me long ago has become a life-long friend! Consider all the classmates, neighbors, friends, colleagues and fellow believers who form a joyous network of support in your senior years!

Jesus is your very best friend of all! “Greater love has no one than this, that someone lay down his life for his friends” (John 15:13). He made the ultimate sacrifice on a cross to win your place in heaven. He continues to bring you joy, comfort, inspiration and strength as you journey through life on earth. One day he will invite you to live forever in his glorious presence!

*Sharolyn Sander  
Lincoln, NE*

**Thank you, Lord,** for being my closest companion and the Savior of my soul. Amen.

**Send:** Use God’s Word to bless your friends in holiday greetings.

**Read:** John 15:14-17, Colossians 3:12-17

MONDAY, DECEMBER 9, 2019

# Level Ground

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I will turn the darkness before them into light, the rough places into level ground.

*Isaiah 42:16*

Isaiah reminds us of God's promise to send the Messiah to bring light into the darkness. In this dark world, wandering blind souls struggle over rough places, vainly trying to find their way. But when Jesus the Messiah comes, he turns darkness into light. The path ahead becomes clear. Rough places turn into level ground.

Just before Jesus arrives, John the Baptist reminds the people of God's promise. John "came as a witness, to bear witness about the light, that all might believe through him" (John 1:7). John still speaks to us today, as we hear his hope that all might believe. When we see the light of Christ and turn from our wandering ways to the one true God, then we see the level ground ahead leading to eternal life.

*Marj Maynard  
Pipe Creek, TX*

**Lord,** I don't want to wander in the darkness. Light my way toward level ground today. Amen.

**Shine:** Share God's light so that others may see.

**Read:** John 1:6-8; 2 Corinthians 4:1-6



TUESDAY, DECEMBER 10, 2019

# Presence

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Not as the world gives do I give to you.

*John 14:27*

The world's peace often depends on the absence of something. In the absence of war, we have peace (or hope to have it). When storms clear and flooding rivers recede, peace—a troubled peace of cleaning and restoration—descends on the landscape. When certain individuals are absent from a holiday meal, the gathering may be more peaceful. If only we didn't have so much to do during the busy Christmas season, then we would surely have a sense of peace

The peace that Jesus gives does not depend on the absence of a person or set of circumstances, but on his presence. The peace that Jesus gives depends only and entirely on Jesus. During raging storms, quarrels and overbooked lifestyles, the presence of Jesus, with his forgiveness and love, floods our hearts with peace.

*Carol Geisler  
Manchester, MO*

**Jesus, Prince of Peace,** fill me with the peace that you alone can give. Amen.

**Remember:** In the most troubling and busy times, remember that Jesus is with you to bless you.

**Read:** John 14:21-27; Luke 2:11-14

WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 11, 2019

# Peace Amid the Chaos

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And his name shall be called ... Prince of Peace.

*Isaiah 9:6*

Fighting the holiday crowds to find a close parking spot at the mall. Putting up the tree and decorating it. Hanging the lights outside your house. Shopping for just the right gift on everyone's wish list. Waiting in line at the post office to mail Christmas cards. Can you feel the stress just reading this list of what we *should* do to prepare for Christmas?

The world wants us to concentrate on what it has to offer, but Isaiah offers us different advice. Years before it happened, the prophet Isaiah foretold that a child would be born. This child, this baby, would be called the Prince of Peace. A baby bringing peace? It doesn't seem possible. Yet this boy grows up to bring peace to all. It's not the peace that the world desires—freedom from strife and discord. Instead, it is eternal peace forever in heaven.

*Celeste Cummins  
Storm Lake, IA*

**Thank you, heavenly Father,** for sending your Son as the Prince of Peace for the world. Amen.

**Rest:** Amid the rush of the Christmas season, spend some quiet time alone with God.

**Read:** Isaiah 9:1-7; Luke 2:1-21



THURSDAY, DECEMBER 12, 2019

# The Christ Mission

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For God, who said, "Let light shine out of darkness," has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.

*2 Corinthians 4:6*

According to NASA there is 68% dark energy in the universe, but the darkness of sin is everywhere. Jesus came at just right time in the history of the world to pull us out of the darkness and to bring us into his glorious light. He shines through the light of his presence, his forgiveness, his peace, his community and his very body and blood. He makes us his own children. So, no matter what dark matter of sin we deal with, no matter what we hear on the news that feels dark and foreboding, we have the assurance of knowing Jesus said, "It is finished" (John 19:30). The Christ Mission was successful, and he holds us safely in his arms now and for eternity.

*Nancy Rapp  
St. Louis, MO*

**Dear Lord Jesus,** light up my life with your Spirit so I can shine with your hope in the darkness and in the lives of family and friends. Amen.

**Shine:** Share with others the light of the world, Jesus Christ.

**Read:** 2 Corinthians 4:1-6; John 3:16-19

FRIDAY, DECEMBER 13, 2019

# Coincidence

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I will recount all of your wonderful deeds.

*Psalm 9:1*

My wife and I were about to purchase a new replacement appliance when a woman in the store handed us a \$20-off coupon. She couldn't use it for what she was buying, but we could, and did. What a coincidence! We were delighted to be there to receive her coupon.

A professor once spoke to us about how God involves himself even in the little things in our lives: "I believe that coincidence is one of God's many little miracles where he remains anonymous." We celebrate our Savior's birth at Christmas with thanks to God for this great miracle of giving his Son to save us. We can also look to God for the "little miracles"—coincidences—that remind us that he is right here with us and that he loves us.

*Steve Hess  
Ft. Myers, FL*

**Thank you, Father,** for the miracle of your Son, born to save us. Fill us with thanks and praise today for your miracles, great and small. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

**Reflect:** Think about how many little miracles God continues to provide to assure us that he is with us.

**Read:** Psalm 9:1-12; Matthew 1:18-25

SATURDAY, DECEMBER 14, 2019

# Light of the World

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Again Jesus spoke to them, saying, "I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life."

*John 8:12*

For several years I lived in Juneau, Alaska, where it rains 85 inches a year and snows 76 inches each winter while the sun peaks out just 86 days a year. I craved bright blue skies after the long spells of rain, sleet or snow. When the sun burst through the clouds, its brightness warmed me and lifted my downtrodden spirit. The sunshine transformed my gloom into joy!

In John 8:12, Jesus tells me that he is the light of the world, and I do not walk in darkness if I follow him. His saving grace and light lead me on the right path. I was captive to sin and the devil before Jesus burst into my life. He leads me to shine with his love through my thoughts, words and deeds.

*MaryAnn Sundby  
Castle Rock, CO*

**Dear Jesus,** you are the light that keeps me from walking in darkness. Help me follow you and shine with your love always. Amen.

**Shine:** Look for ways to reflect Jesus' love to the people you meet today.

**Read:** John 1:1-5; 1 Thessalonians 5:5-11

SUNDAY, DECEMBER 15, 2019

# Waiting

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Blessed is he who waits.

*Daniel 12:12*

Our church calendar sets Advent aside as a time for waiting. Waiting is not what we choose to do—not at the red light, not at the checkout line, not even for the coffeepot to finish. We'll have instant coffee, thank you.

Abraham waited a hundred years for God's promise to him of a son to be fulfilled. Martha waited four days for Jesus to come to be with Lazarus. The father of the prodigal son in Jesus' parable waited, but this was not idle waiting—an example for us. Waiting for the Lord's time requires patience, prayer and trust. This is a picture of our loving heavenly Father who waits with open arms for us to come to him with our prayers and praise as his beloved children. "Commit your way to the Lord; trust in him, and he will act" (Psalm 37:5).

*Connie Bretscher  
Valparaiso, IN*

**Creator of the universe**, help our trust in you so that we grow in faith as we wait. As we wait for an answer to prayer, you are working for our good. Amen.

**Remember:** Our gracious God never gives up on us. Trust him.

**Read:** Jeremiah 29:11; Lamentations 3:25



MONDAY, DECEMBER 16, 2019

# Shalom

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And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

*Philippians 4:7*

We have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ since we have been justified by faith. We still crave the peace of God when too much turmoil, chaos and distress run rampant in our lives. The Hebrew word *shalom*, meaning peace, harmony, wholeness, completeness, prosperity, welfare and tranquility, is empty of meaning when our minds rush in every direction.

Our desired peace beyond understanding appears out of reach. It is time to recharge ourselves with our Prince of Peace who takes care of the disturbances of life. Cultivating our relationship with Christ and relaxing in the knowledge that there is nothing God cannot handle helps us to regain Christ's *shalom*.

*Connie Streich  
Montello, WI*

**Lord**, remind us that our peace is not dependent upon ourselves but on you. Amen.

**Rest:** Spend time in prayer and the study of God's Word. Rest in God's presence.

**Read:** Daniel 6:16-23

TUESDAY, DECEMBER 17, 2019

# Competing for Space

---

For to us a child is born, to us a son is given.

*Isaiah 9:6*

Christmas comes earlier each year, it seems. December 25 is a fixed date, but school supplies, harvest and Christmas overlap space on store shelves. In the holiday rush, much vies for our attention. We decorate and bake. We may become irritated looking for a mall parking space or when gifts are out of stock. Holiday travel plans or preparing a guest room add to our list. It's easy in Christmas activities to crowd out Jesus, yet his birthday is the reason for the season. As we celebrate, let's ask, where in my space is Jesus?

Can you slow down today, forget your list and be Jesus to someone? Invite a friend to lunch, make a phone call or visit a home-bound friend. Think about writing a note on a Christmas card. Stores rush and clutter the season, but we don't have to follow their lead. Let's celebrate by loving people.

*Marilyn Nutter  
Greer, SC*

**Lord,** you are the reason to celebrate. Show me today how I can share your love. Amen.

**Learn:** Look at your calendar and write in the name of a person, then make a plan.

**Read:** John 13:34; Galatians 5:22-23



WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 18, 2019

# A Lesson from Linus

---

Fear not, for behold I bring you good news of great joy.

*Luke 2:10*

Sometimes you hear a sermon that stays with you. A few years ago, on Christmas Eve, I heard such a sermon. I can still recall with clarity how my pastor zeroed in on the moment Linus dropped his blanket in the TV special *A Charlie Brown Christmas*.

Linus, of course, was never without his security blanket. That is, until he responded to the question, “Does anyone know the real meaning of Christmas?” by stepping into the spotlight and reciting Luke chapter two. As he speaks the angel’s words, “Fear not,” his blanket falls gently away. A subtle, yet powerful, reminder that in Christ every fear, doubt and worry falls away. For in him, and only him, we find peace that passes all understanding. Good news of great joy indeed!

*Jane Wilke  
Woodbury, MN*

**Dear Jesus,** help us take to heart the fact that only in you can we find peace. Amen.

**Reflect:** What doubts, fears or worries are you holding onto?

**Read:** Psalm 118; Philippians 4:4-7

THURSDAY, DECEMBER 19, 2019

# Needing a Guide

---

For you are my rock and my fortress; and for your name's sake you lead me and guide me.

*Psalm 31:3*

Recently, I was at a large, unfamiliar airport. In the effort to make every bit of information available to travelers, they had made it more confusing. There were information boards everywhere. Inbound flights, out-bound flights, various terminals, times and gates. And they were repeated every few feet.

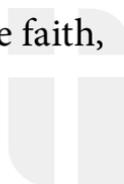
I had time to sit and observe passengers of all ages. Some were quite proficient at choosing the information they needed while others were overwhelmed. I overheard an individual comment, "I want a human guide." When we have the opportunity to discuss our faith with someone, in our enthusiasm, we often tend to overwhelm them with more information than they can possibly absorb. We need to share the basics and then be that "human guide" to answer their questions.

*Gloria Doty  
Fort Wayne, IN*

**Holy Spirit**, you promised to give us the right words to share. Help us hear your voice. Amen.

**Listen:** When others ask questions about the faith, ask the Spirit for help in answering.

**Read:** John 16:13; Luke 1:79; Acts 8:27-35



FRIDAY, DECEMBER 20, 2019

# Rescued

---

The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.

*John 1:5*

The shepherds near Bethlehem knew about darkness. The darkness that surrounded them was relieved only by the moon and stars and perhaps a fire. It is no wonder they were terrified by the unearthly light that was “the glory of the Lord” (Luke 2:9).

The darkness that surrounds so many people today is not simply the absence of light. It is the darkness of sin that once defined us all: “For at one time you were darkness” (Ephesians 5:8). It is darkness unrecognized by those lost in it. We had to be rescued by someone who reached into the darkness with light, rescued by the One who is light, Jesus, the Light of the world. In the dark day of his crucifixion and the bright dawn of his resurrection, sin’s darkness was shattered. Now we, as children of light, reach out with Jesus’ love and light to rescue the lost.

*Carol Geisler  
Manchester, MO*

**Jesus,** help us to reflect your light. Amen.

**Shine:** Turn off all other lights and admire the Christmas tree lights shining in the darkness.

**Read:** John 1:1-5; John 3:16-21

SATURDAY, DECEMBER 21, 2019

# Peace and Joy

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And a woman named Martha welcomed him into her house. And she had a sister called Mary, who sat at the Lord's feet and listened to his teaching.

*Luke 10:38-39*

Remember the story of Mary and Martha? Martha spent much of her time preparing the meal and serving their guests, while Mary preferred to sit at the Lord's feet and learn from him. Both treated his visit as a special occasion, but only one took the time to listen. Jesus told them Mary had made the better choice.

We could apply that wisdom to find peace and joy at Christmas. Spending peaceful times with family and in meditation and prayer should be higher priorities than the spic and span house or the perfect Christmas meals. Consider what will make the most memories and do that. Sometimes my husband and I treat our family to meals at a restaurant. We tell them we enjoy spending their inheritance!

*Annette Schumacher  
Muskego, WI*

**Dear Jesus,** please help us adjust our priorities so we find more peace and joy at Christmas. Amen.

**Enjoy:** Follow the wise words of Jesus all year long to enjoy quality time with God, family and friends.

**Read:** 1 Thessalonians 5:16-18; John 5:39

SUNDAY, DECEMBER 22, 2019

# Peace

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You keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on you, because he trusts in you.

*Isaiah 26:3*

I can't think of anything more peaceful than a baby asleep in my arms. The child hasn't a care in the world and has complete trust in the one who holds him as he drifts off to sleep. No worrying over work that is unfinished or ambitions not met. He's perfectly at rest in the arms of the one who loves him. In turn, with no other goal than to hold the slumbering baby, that peace seeps into me.

This is a reflection of the peace the Father promises when we put ourselves in his care. It is a tiny taste of the world to come where there are no tears, sorrow or fear, and no unmet expectations.

*Lynne Waite Chapman  
Fort Wayne, IN*

**Father**, thank you for the perfect peace that comes only from you. May I share that peace with those around me. Amen.

**Comfort:** Share with others Scripture verses that bring you peace.

**Read:** Isaiah 30:15; John 14:27

MONDAY, DECEMBER 23, 2019

# Hectic Days?

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A time to tear and a time to mend, a time to be silent and a time to speak.

*Ecclesiastes 3:7*

I recently heard a clever quote to encourage the younger and the older during the holidays: “Spend time with your elders. Not everything can be found on Google!” Quite a conversation starter for this time of year when friends and relatives are often in town!

So how do your family and friend gatherings go for you? Sometimes great? Sometimes edgy? Sometimes a disaster? Sometimes not at all? In human families, there are always times when “peace on earth” is heard more on TV or the radio than through family voices.

But fret not! The Prince of Peace, Christ Jesus, has arrived. In the midst of our hassles and frustrations, he is there in the midst of us, providing comfort, joy and hope to each of us, of every age.

*Rich Bimler  
Bloomington, IL*

**Lord**, turn our hectic days into your holy days, beginning with me. In the name of the Prince of Peace. Amen.

**Discuss:** Take time during the holidays to talk with someone about turning hectic days into holy days.

**Read:** Isaiah 9:6-7

TUESDAY, DECEMBER 24, 2019

# Lowly Shepherds

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There were shepherds out in the field.

*Luke 2:8*

According to legend, the white color on the candy cane represents the purity of the virgin birth and the sinless nature of Christ. The “J” shape reminds us of Jesus, our Good Shepherd. The red stripes represent Christ’s suffering and death for us. But, have you ever considered that the candy cane could also represent the lowly shepherds?

These men were out on the hills near Bethlehem tending their sheep the night that Jesus was born. They were the first people to hear the news of the Savior’s birth. After they had seen the baby for themselves, the shepherds told others the message of the angels (Luke 2:17). Long before texting, tweeting and the internet, God used humble shepherds to spread the news of Jesus’ birth. If he can use humble shepherds, he can use us too!

*Celeste Cummins  
Storm Lake, IA*

**Dear God,** thank you for using the lowly and humble to tell others of your love. Amen.

**Share:** Give out candy canes to remind others of the humble shepherds who told about Jesus.

**Read:** Luke 2:1-20

WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 25, 2019

# The Greatest Gift

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Thanks be to God for his inexpressible gift!

*2 Corinthians 9:15*

I often struggle with answering a common question around this time of the year: What do I want for Christmas? Well, I don't know about you, but the older I become, the less I feel the need for excessive material possessions. Maybe maturity or wisdom are the driving force behind this mindset. However, I find there is one thing that I need more as time passes by—my relationship with my Savior. He is the foundation and driving force in my life. He is the bright light always guiding my path.

We were all given a precious gift through his birth, the gift of eternal life with him in heaven. You see, we've already received the greatest gift ever given!

*Betsy Becker Niedringhaus  
Ballwin, MO*

**Dear Father,** help remind me of what is important in life. Amen.

**Praise:** Give thanks for the greatest gift we received by regularly worshipping our Savior.

**Read:** 1 Timothy 6:6-10



THURSDAY, DECEMBER 26, 2019

# Needing Traction

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Forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead.

*Philippians 3:13*

Regardless of where you live, there may be times when your vehicle becomes stuck, unable to move. The wheels can find no traction, causing them to spin endlessly. Unless we put some cat litter or cardboard under the tire, there's nothing for the tires to grab.

Unfortunately, there are times in our lives when we become stuck. Our situation, whether it is our health, finances, relatives or something else, hinders us from moving forward. Constantly thinking about it is like spinning wheels. We become discouraged and agitated but we make no forward progress. God's Word is our traction. If we seek encouragement from God's Word, we will find ourselves moving forward. It may not be an immediate solution to our problems, but we will slowly find solid ground, inch by inch.

*Gloria Doty  
Fort Wayne, IN*

**Father**, show us your strength and help us move forward. Amen.

**Encourage:** Share stories of the times your vehicle was stuck and how you eventually moved forward.

**Read:** Romans 15:4; Exodus 14:15

FRIDAY, DECEMBER 27, 2019

# More Than We Think

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Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, rejoice ... do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God.

*Philippians 4:4-6*

I believe that we can always be thankful because we have more than we think. A friend sent this list of things to be thankful for. See if you can identify with it:

Thank you for the mess to clean after a party ... because it means I have been surrounded by friends.

The clothes that fit a little too snug ... because it means I have enough to eat.

My huge heating bill ... because it means I'm warm.

The lady behind me in church who sings off key ... because it means that I can hear.

The alarm that goes off in the early morning hours ... because it means I'm alive.

*Mike Lutz  
Shelby Twp., MI*

**Lord,** show me all that I have been given by you. Let me truly be thankful. Amen.

**Write:** Make a list of some of your many blessings.

**Read:** Psalm 126



SATURDAY, DECEMBER 28, 2019

# Comforts

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My eyes have seen your salvation.

*Luke 2:30*

A recent power outage lasted for days. Being without any modern comforts, I had the opportunity to think about the many people in the Bible who had patience.

I found that I related the most with Simeon. Simeon was old and probably had aches and pains too. But Simeon had been told that he would not die until he had seen Christ. So he remained devout in his faith as he waited and waited. He exhibited what we all need as we grow older—faith and patience. When Simeon saw the baby Jesus, he knew immediately that this was the Savior. He then sang a beautiful canticle which still provides comfort today: “Lord, now you are letting your servant depart in peace, for my eyes have seen your salvation.”

With the outage, modern comforts were gone, but the comfort of God’s Word remained.

*Stan Tordsen  
Stewartville, MN*

**Lord**, help me to have the faith and patience of Simeon. Amen.

**Reflect:** Think of another biblical person who exhibited patience.

**Read:** Luke 2:22-32

SUNDAY, DECEMBER 29, 2019

# Where Does It Hurt?

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Jesus said to him, "What do you want me to do for you?"

*Mark 10:51*

The doctor asks, "Where does it hurt?" Doctors can't know what's wrong until we tell them.

Jesus encountered a sea of humanity, elites and peasants, men and women, young and old, the sick and the lame. As a whole, they didn't have much in common, except this: they were all hurting. Sometimes they could tell Jesus where it hurt, sometimes they couldn't. Sometimes they didn't know. The paralytic lying on his mat thought all the hurt was in his legs. It wasn't. Jesus healed him where it hurt most. "Son, your sins are forgiven" (Mark 2:5).

Jesus heals us where we hurt most. Without peace with God, we were hurting, dying. Jesus went to the cross to bring healing to where we hurt most. One sweet day, all our hurting will be gone, as we stand beside our King.

*David Boyd  
Staunton, VA*

**Jesus,** heal me according to your love. Amen.

**Comfort:** Listen to those who are hurting.

**Read:** Matthew 20:29-34



MONDAY, DECEMBER 30, 2019

# Already There

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We have sought the Lord our God. We have sought him and he has given us peace on every side. So they built and prospered.

*2 Chronicles 14:7*

We were comfortable with the idea of downsizing but didn't know where to go! We had a hard time picturing ourselves in a different space. It was tiring trying to choose among uncomfortable choices. We felt unsettled about our destination.

Then I realized God knew where we would end up! Our Lord was already in our next apartment preparing it for us! Indeed, when we did finally find a satisfactory choice, we felt his presence as soon as we walked in. God was there first.

*Lisa Heule  
Littleton, CO*

**Father,** I know you are always ahead of me, inviting me closer to your peace. Amen.

**Think:** Think of a place you might go today, where God is already waiting.

**Read:** John 14:1-3; John 14:27; Matthew 11:28

TUESDAY, DECEMBER 31, 2019

# Go in Peace

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And Jethro said to Moses, “Go in peace.”

*Exodus 4:18*

From the time I was little, I’ve loved hearing the benediction: “The Lord bless you and keep you; the Lord make his face to shine upon you and be gracious to you; the Lord lift up his countenance upon you and give you peace” (Numbers 6:24-26). God had revealed to Moses that he wanted Aaron, as priest, to speak these words of blessing. Only recently I learned that Moses had also received a blessing of peace from his father-in-law as he left his family in order follow God’s call to lead the children of Israel out of slavery and into the promised land.

What a lovely sending to give someone you love—the blessing of God’s peace. Don’t miss the opportunity to send others away with God’s blessing by simply saying, “Go in peace.”

*Jane Wilke  
Woodbury, MN*

**Father**, only through Jesus can we experience the truest blessing of peace. Help us to share it with others. Amen.

**Consider:** Will you join me in replacing “Good-bye” with “Go in peace”?

**Read:** Hebrews 13:20-21; 3 John 15



# HOLY HABITS for HOPE-FULL HEALTH

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## 5 “WARNING SIGNS” OF PEACE

“Peace Be With You!” is the theme of this issue. Here are 5 ways to “Live Peace” in your daily life:

- P **PRACTICE** positive thoughts—Hang around with positive and friendly people; Say YES more than NO to yourself and others.
- E **EXERCISE** your mind, body and spirit every day—through walking, stretching, reading, praying, and meditating. Exercise forgiving others also. It’s not too late to say “I’m sorry” to someone.
- A **ALONE** time is refreshing and relaxing—Turn off the TV, enjoy a special treat, be kind to yourself. Have a “Peace Place” where you can go daily to think, pray and just be yourself.
- C **CHUCKLE**—Laugh at yourself, as often as possible! Don’t take yourself so seriously. Remember, “He who laughs, lasts!”
- E **ELIMINATE** clutter—both in your home and in your mind. Give items away for birthday gifts. Simplify your home and schedule. DO things as long as you enjoy doing them. Instead of focusing on Doing, focus on Being who you are—a person loved and forgiven by Christ!

Now go and “sleep in heavenly PEACE!”

# Hope-Full Praying Finding Strength

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Lord, give us a willing heart so that we can find the strength to do loving things for others. Give us the strength to strengthen the bodies and souls of others—a friend, a family member, a stranger, someone we haven't even met. Give us the strength to remember those whom the world has forgotten—the least, the lost, the last, the lonely. You are our strength, Lord. Use us to strengthen others. Amen.

## Being Grateful

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During these Thanksgiving days, Lord, remind us that every day is a day of Thanks-Living, in you. Thanks for giving us a thankful heart as we share and care for those around us who have so little of the things we have so much of. Open our hearts and our eyes, Lord, so that we can reach out and touch others so that your love touches them through us. Amen.

## Christmas Traditions

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Beyond the regular traditions of Christmas cards, trees and carols, this year, Lord, empower me to be a Christmas tradition myself, to others, by wrapping my words in your love to share with a neighbor, by reminding others about the “reason for the season,” by sharing my personal gifts with those who have less than I, by giving myself as a gift of help and support to those in need. Make me a tradition, Lord, for you. Amen.

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