



*Advent Devotionals*  
2023

UNITED IN HOPE

*F*riends,

It is with great pleasure that I present to you this Advent devotional titled “United in Hope” which showcases the multicultural richness that exists in the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.). This devotional features the writings of many leaders who serve in our communities of faith.

This Advent devotional celebrates our diversity and more. It highlights our multicultural communities and the different gifts, traditions, and languages they weave into the life of the PC(USA). It provides an opportunity to come together and appreciate the beauty of multiculturalism, offering a fresh perspective on this beloved time of year.

The Advent season is a time of reflection and anticipation, a period of spiritual preparation leading up to Christmas. It is a time when many of us seek to deepen our connection with our faith, our values, and our sense of community. This devotional serves as a bridge that connects us to one another and reminds us that, in the Advent season and always, our differences are not obstacles but God’s gifts that enrich the tapestry of our shared experiences. In Advent, we all can come together in joy, love and above all, hope.

In the Advent spirit, let us commit to embrace and celebrate the God-given diversity that surrounds us as we read, reflect on, and participate in the “United in Hope” devotional. In doing so, may we rekindle the spirit of unity and inclusivity that this season embodies. Together, we can make this Advent a time of deeper understanding, greater empathy, and boundless love.

May this devotional be a beacon of light that guides us through the season and reminds us of the beauty in our world’s diverse traditions. Happy Advent to all, and may this season be one of profound meaning and connection.

Blessings to you, yours, and your ministries during this Advent.

*Stephanie Vasquez*  
Manager  
Global Language Resources  
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**Stephanie Vasquez** was born in Trujillo, Peru. She was encouraged to serve to the Presbyterian Church USA while on a road trip to volunteer at a detention center with three Presbyterian pastors. She has served the PCUSA since 2013 in different roles. Currently, she serves as the Manager for Global Language Resources.



# December 3

Based on Luke 21: 5

Our church is not particularly beautiful. We are used to knocking down walls as needed to maximize the utility of a room. We purchased our church campus from a defense contractor and renovated what was once office space and an airplane hangar into a place where people of all ages can worship. Our layout is provisional, and we are constantly renovating.

We are grateful for our campus, but all of us became members of the church in spite of the physical structure. The roof leaks in places, and when we patch in one spot, the water pools and drips in another. We are constantly outgrowing rooms and scrambling to find space for new ministries. None of us were drawn by the building itself. If anyone told us that our campus would be rubble in a few decades, none of us would be surprised. Some might be relieved.

However, we are starting to invest more in our spaces. Now, I see people sitting on new chairs, staring at the announcements on the LED wall, and sipping on an espresso drawn from machines that cost thousands. Our spaces are becoming not just usable, but optimal, and some might say, even beautiful.

That is why I pause while meditating on Jesus' words in verse 6. "As for what you see here, the time will come when not one stone will be left on another; every one of them will be thrown down." When I am tempted to remark on the cutting edge technology


누가복음 21:5에 기초함

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그러나 우리는 공간에 더 많은 투자를 하기 시작했습니다. 이제 저는 사람들이 새 의자에 앉아 LED 벽의 공지 사항을 바라보며, 수천 달러 짜리 기계에서 추출한 에스프레소를 마시는 것을 봅니다. 우리의 공간은 이제 쓸만한 공간이 되었을 뿐만 아니라 최적화되었으며, 어떤 이들은 아름답다고 말하기까지 합니다.

그래서 저는 6절에 있는 예수의 말씀을 묵상하면서 잠시 생각합니다. "너희 보는 이것들이 날이 이르면 돌 하나도 돌 위에 남지 않고 다 무너뜨려지리라." 우리의 성소를 장식하는 최첨단 기술과 하나님께 바쳐진 다른 모든 선물의 아름다움에 대해 말하고 싶은 유혹을 받을 때, 예수님은 건물과 그 안에 있는 모든 것이 일시적이라는 것을 상기시켜 주십니다.



that adorns our sanctuary and the beauty of all the other gifts dedicated to God, Jesus reminds me that the building and every *thing* in it is temporary. While Jesus promises that “not a hair on your head will perish,” meaning God will providentially preserve our ability to worship all the days of our life, we know church buildings get torn down for a variety of reasons.

The world is a scary place. When I was serving a church in Seoul, the reality that missiles and artillery from North Korea could rain down destruction at any moment was something we just had to get used to and live with. Similarly, anti-Asian sentiment in America can flare up at any time, and threats from micro-aggression to murder are on my mind as I consider whether to take the subway when traveling with my family. Nations rise up against nation, and groups within a nation turn on each other. Such violence can lead to churches being destroyed. So also might a church be destroyed by the forces of apathy and selfishness, as members forget how to maintain the unity God has gifted to us. Considering such possibilities, the thought that our building might fall apart from overuse, forcing us to find an alternative worship space, doesn't sound bad at all.

So when the group of senior citizens on Saturday forgets to clean up and the coffee station is left a mess, and the sugar attracts ants and roaches, I don't need to panic. If a teenager brought his dog to a meeting, resulting in a smelly accident left in the sanctuary, there's no need to get angry. We'll do our best to share wise guidelines and take care of the building, but we would rather have the building be used than not.

For our mindset should be the same as that of Christ Jesus. Jesus was not loath to draw near to the messy

예수님은 “너희 머리털 하나도 상하지 아니하리라”고 약속 하시며, 우리가 일평생 하나님을 예배할 수 있게 하셨지만, 반면에 교회 건물은 여러 이유로 허물어진다는 것을 우리는 알고 있습니다.

세상은 무서운 곳입니다. 서울에서 교회를 섬길 때는 언제라도 북한의 미사일과 포탄이 우리를 파괴할 수 있다는 현실에 익숙해져야 했습니다. 마찬가지로 미국에서는 반 아시아 감정이 언제든 불타오를지도 모른다는 것을 생각해야 합니다. 가족과 여행하며 지하철을 타러 할 때, 먼저 차별부터 살인에 이르는 위협들이 머리에 떠오릅니다. 국가들이 서로를 대적하여 일어나고, 한 국가 안의 집단들은 서로에게 등을 돌립니다. 그러한 폭력은 교회를 파괴하는 결과를 낼 수 있습니다. 또한 교회가 무관심과 이기심의 세력에 의해 파괴될 수 있으며, 교인들은 하나님께서 우리에게 주신 하나됨을 유지하는 방법을 잊어버릴 수도 있습니다. 이러한 가능성을 고려할 때, 우리 건물이 과도하게 사용되어 대체 예배 공간을 찾아야 할 수도 있다는 생각은 전혀 나쁘게 들리지 않습니다.

그러므로 토요일에 어르신 그룹이 청소하는 것을 잊어서 커피 스테이션이 엉망이 되고 개미와 바퀴벌레가 설탕에 몰려 들어도 당황할 필요가 없습니다. 십 대 청소년이 개를 회의에 데려와 성소에 배변하는 사고를 냈어도 화를 낼 필요가 없습니다. 우리는 현명한 지침을 공유하고 건물을 돌보기 위해 최선을 다할 것이지만, 건물을 사용하지 않는 것보다 건물을 사용하는 것이 좋습니다.

우리의 마음가짐은 예수 그리스도의 마음가짐과 같아야 하기 때문입니다. 예수님은 지저분하고 그릇된 행동을 하는 사람들에게 가까이 다가가는 것을 싫어하지 않으셨습니다. 예수님은 우리에게 가까이 오셔서 우리의 복잡한 삶에 동참하셨습니다. 그렇기에 예수님은 도움이 필요한 모든 사람들이 자신의 이름을 지닌 건물에 나아 오기를 원하신다는 것을 우리는 알아야 합니다.

성령은 누구를 우리 건물로 데려오실까요? 우리 회중에 활기를 불어넣고 우리 위원회에서 봉사할, 어린 자녀가 있는

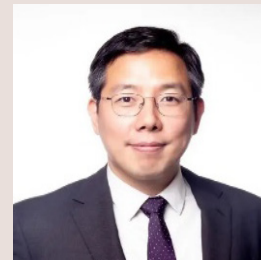
and misbehaved. Jesus came near and joined us in our mess. Thus we should expect that Jesus would want all who need help to draw near to the buildings that bear his name.

Who will the Holy Spirit bring to our buildings? There is nothing wrong with hoping for God to bring families with young children who will enliven our congregations and serve on our committees. But we should also recognize that the unaccompanied angry teens and the lonely senior citizens without rides may also be called to join us in our buildings. And as we hear of earthquakes, famine, and pestilence, and as American actions abroad bring asylum seekers to our neighborhoods, we should prayerfully consider how God wants to use our buildings.

*Prayer: Dear Father, may every church building be yielded to your Spirit, and may our cheerful hospitality cause others to know you. As we share good news, may we become beautiful in the way that matters most. In Jesus' name we pray.*

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**Samuel An** serves as an English Ministry Pastor at Arumdaun Presbyterian Church, a mostly Korean-American congregation in Bethpage, Long Island.



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**Samuel An** 목사는 롱아일랜드의 베스페이지에 있는 한인 교회인 '아름다운 장로교회'에서 영어 사역 목사로 섬기고 있습니다.

가정을 하나님께서 데려오시기를 바라는 것은 잘못된 것이 아닙니다. 그러나 우리는 또한 친구가 없는 성년 십 대들과 운전해서 올 수 없는 외로운 노인들도 우리 건물에 우리와 함께 하도록 부름을 받을 수 있음을 인식해야 합니다. 그리고 지진, 기근, 전염병에 대한 소식을 들을 때, 또 미국의 조치로 해외의 망명 신청자들이 우리의 이웃이 될 때, 우리는 하나님께서 우리 건물을 어떻게 사용하기를 원하시는지 기도하는 마음으로 생각해 보아야 합니다.

**기도: 사랑하는 아버지, 모든 교회 건물이 성령께 드러지게 하시고, 우리가 누군가를 환대하는 일을 통해서 다른 사람들이 당신을 알게 되기를 기도합니다. 우리가 좋은 소식을 나눌 때, 우리가 가장 중요한 방식으로 아름다워지기를 바랍니다. 예수님의 이름으로 기도합니다.**

# December 4

*O senhor e justo em todos os seus atos e fiel em tudo o que faz. Ele esta perto de todos os que pedem a sua ajuda, dos que pedem com sinceridade.*

*Salmo 145: 17,18*

Jesus nao poupou o seu tempo para que outros fossem impactados pela sua vida e obra. Seja um pescador que trabalha a noite toda, uma mulher tirando agua do poço, Um cego de nascença, um aleijado querendo descer pelo telhado, um religioso querendo ver a Jesus no meio da noite, pessoas desesperadas e aflitas que andavam perto dEle. Ele transformou vidas.

Vivimos dias difíceis, em um mundo agitado; tempos incertos; buscamos realizacoes nas coisas materiais, compras, presentes, festas, ostentacao, comemoracao. . . . Ele deseja transforma a sua vida.

Se acerca o Natal: o menino ja nasceu e o principado esta sobre os seus ombros e Ele e grande e ninguem pode comparar a sua grandeza.

Nesse natal devemos dar ao nosso proximo o que Deus ja deu em nosso favor, seu filho Jesus Cristo, servo sofredor e humilde, Rei exaltado, o unico capaz de transformar vida, perdoar pecados, dar esperanca e vida eterna.

Que tenham un feliz natal, tranquilo, sentado aos pes de Jesus, aprendendo com Ele, admirados pela sua simplicidade e grandeza. Gratos pelo seu ato de amor

*The Lord is righteous in all his ways and faithful in all he does. The Lord is near to all who call on him, to all who call on him in truth.*

*Psalm 145:17-18*

Jesus didn't spare any time for others to be impacted by his life and work. Whether it was a fisherman working through the night, a woman drawing water from a well, a man blind from birth, a cripple wanting to climb down from the roof, a religious man wanting to see Jesus in the middle of the night, desperate and afflicted people walking close to him. He transformed lives.

We live in difficult times, in a hectic world, in uncertain times. We seek fulfillment in material things like shopping, gifts, parties, ostentation, celebration. . . . However, He wants to transform your life.

The focus is Christmas: the child is born, and the Kingdom is on his shoulders, and he is great, and no one can compare his greatness.

This Christmas we must give to our neighbor what God has already given to us, his son Jesus Christ, the suffering and humble servant, the exalted King, the only one capable of transforming lives, forgiving sins, giving hope and eternal life.

May you have a happy and peaceful Christmas, sitting at the feet of Jesus, learning from him, and admiring his simplicity and greatness. Thankful for his act of

em abrir mao da eternidade e passar um tempo com a humanidade, mostrando que ha um caminho bom, caminho de vida e paz. Ele e o caminho e Ele e nossa Paz.

***Celebrem, comemorem, festejam aquele que e o verdadeiro sentido do Natal: Jesus Cristo. Emanuel, Deus conosco.***

love in giving up eternity and spending time with humanity, showing that there is a good way, a way of life and peace. He is the way, and He is our Peace.

***Celebrate, commemorate, celebrate the true meaning of Christmas: Jesus Christ. Emmanuel, God with us.***

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**Marlucia Damaceno** e pastora do ministerio hispano El Buen Pastor, em Lilburn Ga. Casada a 25 anos com Igor terrazas,sao pais de Yohan e Susan. Juntos foram chamados para exercer o ministerio em Atlanta em 2006 depois de servir ao senhor como missionarios em Bolivia mais de 10 anos.



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**Marlucia Damaceno** is the pastor of El Buen Pastor Hispanic Ministry in Lilburn, Ga. Married for 25 years to Igor Terrazas, they are the parents to Yohan and Susan. Together they were called to minister in Atlanta in 2006 after serving the Lord as missionaries in Bolivia for more than 10 years.

# December 5

## *Based on Amos 3: 1-11*

The prophecy of Amos is believed to have taken place about 760-750 B.C. for the purpose of pronouncing God's judgement upon the people of Israel living in the Northern kingdom for their complacency, idolatry, and the oppression of the poor and marginalized people in society.

During this period, Jeroboam II ruled Israel (Northern Kingdom) while Ussiah (aka Azariah) ruled Judah (Southern Kingdom). Samaria was the capital of Israel where prosperity, greed, and oppression had taken root.

Wealthy people had accumulated so much wealth that they had become arrogant, to the extent that they did not only oppress the poor, but they also sold the poor into slavery.

The wealthy lived opulent and luxurious lifestyles while ignoring the plight of the poor.

Amos was tasked with the responsibility of calling out the vice, warning of God's wrath upon the nation if the *status quo* was maintained.

Amos was a man who was devoted to serving the Lord and his character reflected this devotion in his own lifestyle. We are told that Amos had humble beginnings having been a shepherd prior to his calling.

What is fascinating about Amos's prophecy is that the behavior he was warning about has been repeated many times over the centuries.

Indeed, the world, in 2023 is witnessing eerie parallels in which even "good Christians" are no longer pretending any more about, their quest and thirst for power, wealth, and the trappings that come with affluence.

Some Prosperity Gospel preachers have become openly arrogant and political in ways that create injustice and sometimes direct hatred to the "other."

Immigrants, women, poor children, people living with disabilities, people struggling with gender issues have been publicly mocked, harassed, and even threatened by people who self-identify as Christians.

"Christianity" in the US has taken a national identity which seems bent on repeating the same issues Amos was sent by God to address many centuries ago.

My prayer is that people of good will, will have the courage to confront religious leaders who have deceived their followers by whipping up "Christian Nationalism" which has had the effect of tearing down Christ's church instead of building it up.



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**Rev. Charles Nyanga** moved to the USA in 1996 with his family of four—my wife, son and daughter. He obtained his M. Div. from ITC Atlanta and a Doctor of Education in Pastoral Community Counseling from Argosy University, Sarasota, Florida.





## December 6

**E**sta porción del evangelio también la encontramos en Marcos 12:1-12 y en Lucas 20:9-19. Jesús tuvo conflictos con los sacerdotes, los fariseos y los ancianos. En este contexto, les hablaba en parábolas para enseñar o responder a una pregunta o con el fin de anunciar el reino de Dios.

Así que los invita a oír otra parábola relacionada con un hombre padre de familia que plantó una viña, la cercó con un vallado, construyó un lagar. También edificó una torre y la arrendó a unos labradores. Se ausentó del país y envió siervos a recibir su parte de los frutos. El dueño de la viña, con todas las buenas actitudes e intenciones encontró obstáculos: se negaron a entregar el fruto de la cosecha, maltrataron y mataron a los siervos. Resolvieron matar al hijo del dueño, para tomar su herencia.

De la misma manera trataron a Jesús, el Rey de los judíos. La piedra que desecharon los edificadores se ha convertido en la piedra angular. El pueblo de Israel rechazó a Jesús, el hijo heredero del Padre. El dueño de la viña, el Padre misericordioso está dispuesto a perdonar para que que seamos partícipes de su reino y un pueblo que da fruto.

Para reflexionar: Como pueblo de Dios, ¿estamos rindiendo frutos?

**Oremos:** *Amado Dios, tu palabra es viva y da vida a todos los seres humanos. Abre nuestro entendimiento para escuchar tu presencia en nuestras vidas a través de las escrituras. Te*

**T**his portion of the gospel is also found in Mark 12:1-12 and Luke 20:9-19. Jesus had conflicts with the priests, the Pharisees and the elders. In this context, He spoke to them in parables to teach or answer a question or with the purpose of announcing the kingdom of God.

So, He invites them to hear another parable related to a man who was a father and planted a vineyard. He fenced it with a hedge, and built a winepress. He also built a tower and leased it to some farmers. He left the country and sent servants to receive his share of the fruits. The owner of the vineyard, with all the good attitudes and intentions, encountered obstacles: they refused to deliver the fruit of the harvest, mistreated, and killed the servants. They resolved to kill the owner's son, to take his inheritance.

In the same way, they treated Jesus, the King of the Jews. The stone which the builders rejected has become the cornerstone. The people of Israel rejected Jesus, the heir son of the Father. The owner of the vineyard, the merciful Father is willing to forgive so that we may be partakers of his kingdom and a people that bears fruit.

And now we bear some food for thought: As God's people, are we bearing fruit?

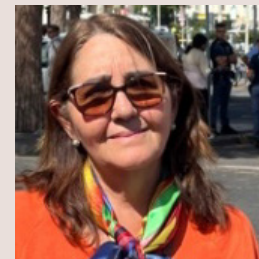
**Let us pray:** *Dear God, your word is living and gives life to everyone. Open our understanding to hear your presence in our lives through the scriptures. We ask that we may be hearers and*

*pedimos que seamos oidores y hacedores de tu palabra. Que el amor de Dios el Padre, la gracia redentora de su hijo Jesucristo, quien vive entre nosotros/as y nos envía a proclamar el evangelio de salvación y un mensaje de amor y paz con esperanza, llenos del Espíritu Santo, sea con todo el pueblo de Dios ahora y siempre, Amen.*

*doers of your word. May the love of God the Father, the redeeming grace of his son Jesus Christ, who lives among us and sends us to proclaim the gospel of salvation and a message of love and peace with hope, filled with the Holy Spirit, be with all God's people now and forever, Amen.*

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**Mirna Jael Rivera Rodríguez** es una anciana gobernante comisionada en la Iglesia Presbiteriana Cristo Redentor en el poblado Rosario en San Germán, Puerto Rico desde los últimos 7 años.



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**Mirna Jael Rivera Rodríguez** is a ruling elder commissioned at Iglesia Presbiteriana Cristo Redentor in the town of Rosario in San Germán, Puerto Rico for the past 7 years.



## December 7

### **Encontrando Esperança em Meio à Adversidade com base em Salmo 126:3**

Quem de nós nunca experimentou momentos de tristeza e desânimo? Certamente, em nossa jornada pela vida, todos enfrentamos desafios, dores e dificuldades que podem nos deixar abatidos. No entanto, o Salmo 126 nos lembra de uma promessa divina que transcende nossas circunstâncias e nos convida a encontrar esperança e alegria na graça que Deus nos oferece em meio à adversidade.

O contexto histórico do Salmo 126 revela o povo de Israel durante o Exílio Babilônico (586 a.C.). Eles estavam longe de casa, separados de sua terra e de seu Templo, e enfrentando a amargura da servidão. A situação parecia desesperadora. Para se ter uma ideia do sofrimento e angústia do povo de Israel exilado na Babilônia, o salmista escreve no Salmo 137 o seguinte: “Junto aos rios da Babilônia, nós nos sentávamos chorando, com saudades de Sião. Nos salgueiros que ali havia, penduramos as nossas harpas, pois os nossos captores pediam-nos canções; os nossos opressores, que fôssemos alegres, diziam: ‘Cantai-nos uma das canções de Sião!’ Como poderíamos cantar as canções do Senhor numa terra estrangeira?” (Salmo 137:1-4, NVI)


Os filhos de Israel não podiam se alegrar ou cantar na terra estrangeira. No entanto, Deus cumpriu Sua promessa, demonstrou Sua graça e misericórdia em meio à adversidade, e eles retornaram a Sião, sua terra natal. De volta a Sião . . . como um sonho! O povo de Israel estava como se estivesse despertando de um

### **Finding Hope in the midst of Adversity based on Psalm 126:3**

Who among us has never experienced moments of sadness and discouragement? Certainly, on our journey through life, we all face challenges, pains and difficulties that can leave us feeling down. However, Psalm 126 reminds us of a divine promise that transcends our circumstances and invites us to find hope and joy in the grace that God offers us in the midst of adversity.

The historical context of Psalm 126 reveals the people of Israel during the Babylonian Exile (586 BC). They were far from home, separated from their land and their Temple, and facing the bitterness of servitude. The situation seemed hopeless. To give an idea of the suffering and anguish of the people of Israel in exile in Babylon, the psalmist writes in Psalm 137: “By the rivers of Babylon we sat weeping, longing for Zion. We hung our harps on the willows there, for our captors asked us for songs; our oppressors said that we should be joyful: “Sing us one of the songs of Zion! How can we sing the songs of the LORD while in a foreign land?” (Psalm 137:1-4, NVI)

The children of Israel couldn't rejoice or sing in the foreign land. However, God kept His promise, showed His grace and mercy in the midst of adversity, and they returned to Zion, their homeland. Back to Zion . . . like a dream! The people of Israel were



sonho, e, por isso, o salmista declara: “Grandes coisas fez o Senhor por nós, pelas quais estamos alegres” (Salmo 126:3, NVI).

Essas palavras ecoam em nossos corações. Sem dúvida, o caminho “*de volta a Sião*” não é fácil e parece sempre reivindicar de nós um investimento de alma, choro, gemido e quebrantamento. Em tempos de dor, é natural que lamentemos diante de Deus. No entanto, este salmo nos lembra que não podemos jamais perder a esperança na fidelidade de Deus, pois Ele é especialista em transformar tragédias em triunfos, lágrimas em risos e tristeza em alegria.

E, assim como os cativos foram libertados e puderam voltar a Sião, Deus pode restaurar e renovar nossas vidas quando confiamos nele. Mesmo nas circunstâncias mais adversas, podemos confiar em Sua fidelidade. Deus é capaz de transformar cada lágrima em riso, cada tristeza em alegria e toda desolação em consolação.

Que possamos encontrar esperança e consolo na promessa divina. Que possamos perseverar na fé, independentemente das circunstâncias, sabendo que o Senhor é digno de nossa confiança. E que, assim como os exilados experimentaram a restauração prometida, nós também podemos confiar que Deus cumprirá todas as Suas promessas e continuará fazendo grandes coisas por nós!

*Amado Deus, unimo-nos em oração, reconhecendo que, por vezes, a jornada da vida nos coloca diante de desafios que parecem insuperáveis, dores que nos abatem e dificuldades que nos causam desânimo e tristeza. No entanto, Senhor, sabemos que Tu és fiel e que Tua promessa transcende nossas circunstâncias. Pedimos, Senhor, que Tu nos*

as if awakening from a dream, and so the psalmist declares: “The LORD has done great things for us, and we are filled with joy.” (Psalm 126:3, NVI).

These words echo in our hearts. Undoubtedly, the road “back to Zion” is not easy and always seems to require an investment of soul, weeping, groaning and brokenness on our part. In times of pain, it’s natural to lament before God. However, this psalm reminds us that we must never lose hope in God’s faithfulness, because he is an expert at turning tragedies into triumphs, tears into laughter and sorrow into joy.

And just as the captives were set free and were able to return to Zion, God can restore and renew our lives when we trust in him. Even in the most adverse circumstances, we can trust in his faithfulness. God is able to turn every tear into laughter, every sorrow into joy and every desolation into consolation.

May we find hope and consolation in God’s promise. May we persevere in faith, regardless of the circumstances, knowing that the Lord is worthy of our trust. And that, just as the exiles experienced the promised restoration, we too can trust that God will fulfill all his promises and continue to do great things for us!

*Dear God, we come together in prayer, recognizing that sometimes life’s journey brings us face to face with challenges that seem impossible to overcome, pains that weigh us down and difficulties that cause us discouragement and sadness. However, Lord, we know that you are faithful, and that your promise*

*concedas a graça de encontrar esperança e alegria em meio à adversidade. Fortalece nossa fé para que possamos confiar em Tua fidelidade, sabendo que Tu és capaz de transformar nossas lágrimas em risos e nossas tristezas em alegria. Confiamos em Ti, Senhor, sabendo que em Tuas mãos está o poder para fazer muito mais do que pedimos e imaginamos. Ajuda-nos a perseverar na fé, independentemente das circunstâncias, e a confiar que Tu cumprirás cada uma de Tuas promessas em nossas vidas. Em nome de Jesus, oramos. Amém.*

*transcends our circumstances. We ask, Lord, that you grant us the grace to find hope and joy in the midst of adversity. Strengthen our faith so that we can trust in Your faithfulness, knowing that You can turn our tears into laughter and our sorrows into joy. We trust you, Lord, knowing that in your hands is the power to do much more than we ask and imagine. Help us to persevere in faith, regardless of the circumstances, and to trust that You will fulfill every one of Your promises in our lives. In Jesus' name, we pray. Amen.*

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## December 8

**這**篇以咒詛開頭的神諭無情地預言以色列人必定衰敗，也在在顯示出先知阿摩司嚴厲卻又帶著無奈的口吻。嚴厲，因他們不斷犯下不公義的罪行又不知悔改；無奈，因得救的路明明如此明顯又簡單（5:4, 6, 14, 15），以色列百姓卻不選擇，執迷不悟地「將公義丟棄於地」（5:7）。由於不公義的行為，導致他們的結局已定，不管再強的軍隊也必定慘敗，因上主的力量能輕易地掌握全宇宙（5:8-9）。

在神諭中，先知指責以色列人犯下比其他國家都還要嚴重的罪——剝削困貧寒人又迫害義人（5:11-12）。對比以色列先祖們曾以不公義為藉口剿滅所有迦南地區的各族，如今，上主也將用萬軍之上帝的名號來對祂原本的選民施行公義。原先應該繁華熱鬧的廣場和街市，以及應該歡慶豐收的葡萄園都將充滿哀嚎與舉哀。因為萬軍之上帝的經過，必定沒有一點受造物能存活，正如上主當初行走埃及遍地那樣（出11:4-5; 12:12）。

在如此嚴重的生命威脅之下，先知也早就預見以色列人會如何行動，但神諭早已清楚講明得救的方法。或許依照先祖的經驗，以色列百姓會想前往聖地舉行各樣地宗教儀式來贖罪（5:5）。但這次罪的根源是不公義，而不是不敬虔；若以色列人不悔改、重新撿起被拋棄的公義，再多的敬虔行為當然也只是枉然。


身為國際生，我很享受美國豐富的恩典，但這卻

**T**his oracle foretells the fall of Israelites ruthlessly with the start of a curse and also shows Amos the prophet's stiff but helpless expression. It is stiff because they did not even want to repent after many injustices. It is helpless because no one chose the right path but continuously brought righteousness to the ground (5:7), even though that was so easy and obvious (5:4, 6, 14, 15). God's power is so great to control the universe (5:8-9) hence the outcome of injustice has already been decided: they will lose pathetically despite the strongest army.

In the oracle, Israelites were accused of committing a sin more critically than others—trampling on the poor and afflicting the righteous (5:11-12). Comparing how they exterminate Canaanites for the sake of righteousness, the LORD is going to use the name of the God of hosts to treat the chosen with the same righteousness. The squares, streets, and vineyards, which should be bustling and celebrating the harvest, are now filled with wailing and mourning. Wherever the God of hosts passed by, nothing could survive, just as how the LORD went through Egypt (Ex. 11:4-5; 12:12).

The prophet also foresaw how the Israelites would behave under this severe living threat, but there was only one way to live in the oracle. According to the experience of ancestors, they might want to host religious rituals at the holy lands (5:5). However, the route of sin was not about devoutness but righteousness. It will be futile to do more rituals if they do not repent and pick up the righteousness from the ground.

As an international student, I enjoy the abundant grace in the US, yet this grace also has been my immense



也是我最大的文化衝擊。我來自以資源回收聞名的台灣，但在來美國後的短短兩個月以內，我所消耗的塑膠袋大約是在台灣十倍之多，免洗餐具、紙盤與外帶餐盒更是至少五十倍以上，因為在台灣學校的食堂幾乎不提供任何拋棄式餐具與餐盤。我尊重美國與台灣的許多文化差異，但美國的製造與浪費是我無法想像的程度，甚至已經不能用懶惰來形容了。在亞特蘭大的超市消費，不拿塑膠袋可能會被當作沒有結帳而被檢查收據；在食堂用環保餐具取餐，會被質疑是不衛生的，即便大家在用餐時都大方的聊天。

面對不環保的質疑，世界第二大碳排放的美國的做法是什麼呢？改用可自然分解的「環保」塑膠袋與免洗餐具。其實，多帶幾個購物袋與環保餐具真的不會造成多大麻煩，也絕對比每週上教堂時帶的聖經與聖詩還要來得輕。若我們不仔細思考問題的源頭，我們所做的事就彷彿重返聖地的以色列人一樣，對問題視而不見，用粗糙的藉口來掩蓋不公不義。

上帝的審判或許不是我們想像地那麼榮耀與神聖，而是在大自然乘載不了的那一天反撲。願今年的待降節帶給我們的，不再只有虛假的儀式與過度包裝的禮物，而是對上主所創造的環境真實負起管家的責任，以我們豐富的資源來改變這世界的不公不義，並在希望中與所有受造界合一。當萬軍之上帝在我們中間「經過」時，願我們可重複利用的購物袋與環保餐具成為尋求上主的遮蓋。

親愛的上主，我們滿心感謝你的降臨，更期待你的再臨。但主啊，我們時常在恩典中麻痺自己，

cultural shock. I came from Taiwan which is known for its recycling. Within two months, I consumed ten times of plastic bags than in Taiwan, and at least fifty times of disposable tableware, paper plates, and take-away meal boxes, since almost every school refectory in Taiwan does not provide any disposable utensils. I respect the cultural difference between Taiwan and the US, yet the degree of consumption is way beyond my imagination. It cannot just be described as lazy. Shopping in a grocery store without plastic bags might be treated as un-pay and be checked; using reusable lunch boxes might be concerned about a hygienic issue, even though everyone is generously talking during the meal.

What did the US, the second most Carbon emission country do when being questioned? Replacing with decomposable “Eco-friendly” plastic bags and utensils. In fact, it is not really causing any problems to bring reusable bags and utensils, and they are much lighter than the Bible and hymnal book that you bring every Sunday to the church. If we do not reflect the route of problems, we will be like the Israelites: go back to the holy sites and roughly cover the unrighteousness with many excuses.

The trial of the LORD might not be as glorious and holy as we thought, but as terrible as the catastrophe of nature when it cannot endure anymore. May this Advent bring us no more hypocritical rituals and over-packaging gifts, but the real responsibility of being the steward of every creature. We shall be united in hope with the creature and fight for justice when we own such abundant resources. May our reusable bags and utensils become our cover when the God of hosts passes through the midst of us.

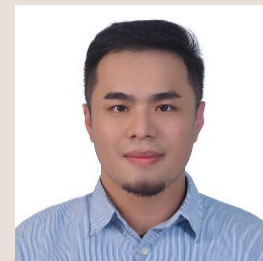
*Prayer: Dear LORD, we appreciate and are looking forward to the Advent. However we paralysis*

忘記你也是令人驚畏的萬軍的上帝，你必用公義帶來審判。我們知道，在你的審判之下無人能倖免。求主憐憫我們，又用那赦罪的恩典光照我們，使我們的愚昧在你聖靈的提醒下得著智慧，知道自己該如何在不公義的行為中悔改。求主讓我們每次紀念你的降臨與再臨時不再只有宗教儀式上的敬虔，更在生活中展現出我們徹底的改變。願我們在身為受造物管家的身份上合一，使我們的環保行動帶出真正的盼望，並成為世人的見證。禱告是奉全然公義又翻轉人們生命的主耶穌基督的名求。阿們。

*ourselves in grace often, forgetting that You are also a frightening and respectful God of hosts, and will trail us in Your righteousness. We know that no one could survive by your trail. Have mercy on us, dear LORD, lightening us with your forgiving grace so that we might gain wisdom in the reminder of the Holy Spirit, knowing how we should repent for our unrighteousness. We ask You to change us thoroughly in our living more than religious rituals in the Advent. May we be united on the responsibility of stewarding the creature, bringing hope in Eco-friendly behaviors, and becoming the testimony to all the world. We pray in the name of Jesus, who is completely righteous and life-changing. Amen.*

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# December 9

**Be Strong! Don't Quit!**  
*based on Jude 17-25*

Worker in God's vineyard, are you under constant attack? Do you feel lonely as a pastor, or an elder or deacon in your faithful service in God's kingdom? The book of Jude is hard hitting, short and straight to the point. Jude is believed to be the half-brother of Jesus.

Now imagine growing up as the kid brother of Jesus and hearing and witnessing all the fun miracles performed by Jesus; healing the sick, opening the eyes of the blind and raising the dead and later to see him falsely accused, maligned, ostracized, and crucified and on the third day, for Him to resurrect from the dead. How do you take all that in?

Jude's letter was written with passion to condemn in no uncertain terms, people who were masquerading as Christians, and claiming to follow the teachings of Jesus and yet were, "mockers, following after their own ungodly lusts, . . . causing divisions, worldly minded and devoid of the Spirit." (Jude 18-19)

Jude's letter was true in those days and more importantly true for us today too. As we live in these last days, there would always be those used by Satan to cause pain and hurts in the church. Jude encourages us to be vigilant and thereby, "build ourselves up in our most holy faith, praying in the Holy Spirit."

In the words of Howard Thurman, an American author, philosopher, and theologian, he said,

"Whatever may be the tensions and stresses of a particular day, there is always lurking close at hand, the trailing beauty of forgotten joy or unremembered peace." There would always be those who would benefit from your faithfulness in doing God's work and someday, the seeds you plant through your sacrifice will grow and testify.

O worker in God's vineyard, do not surrender or quit your faithful work in God's Kingdom. Resist Satan in your steadfast faith, knowing that the same afflictions you are going through is being experienced by other faithful workers in other parts of the world. But the God of all grace, who have called you into His eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after you have suffered a little while, would make you perfect and establish and strengthen you. To God be the glory, great things He has done. Be strong! (1 Peter 5: 9-10)



**Rev. Bernard Nti** is the pastor at Westmont Presbyterian Church. He graduated from Pittsburgh Theological Seminary (PTS) and currently doing his doctoral program at University of Dubuque. Rev. Nti was also a chaplain resident for two years at the Veterans Affairs (VA) Healthcare System at Pittsburgh and went on to pastor two churches in rural Iowa, First Presbyterian Church, Brooklyn and First United Presbyterian Church, Malcom. He was born in Ghana where he was nurtured and raised and moved to United States in 2007. He is married to Edna Nti, a nurse with whom he shares an adorable son called Praise Nti.



# December 10

## Reflexion Sobre El Salmo 24

Dios ha creado la oportunidad de que tengamos esperanza en Él, y para que esta esperanza sea visible en nuestras vidas. Encontramos este efecto visible en el Salmo 24, que debería ser el propósito de cada uno de nosotros en cada día de nuestra vida. Debería ser la razón y el anhelo de cada día al levantarnos cada mañana, deseando tener nuestras manos y corazones limpios para Él.

También podemos mencionar que este salmo significa que uno pertenece a Dios y vive para Dios en acciones, decisiones, emociones y con todo el corazón, alma y fuerza. Esto significa y demuestra que nadie puede pretender haber crecido en santidad sin haber crecido en felicidad, alegría y deleite en Dios y en las cosas de Dios, en el amor y solidaridad de unos con otros.

Durante mucho tiempo se nos ha hablado de la importancia de mantener las manos limpias por razones de salud, y se nos ha invitado e incluso obligado a hacerlo para prevenir infecciones. Por eso, el Salmo 24 nos invita a tener las manos limpias para actuar y el corazón limpio para albergar buenas intenciones hacia quienes nos rodean. Estar limpios nos permite acercarnos al Rey de la gloria, libres de propagar el daño a los demás, y tener un corazón alineado con el amor de Cristo por todos, con justicia y amor.

Así como cuidamos de nosotros mismos, cuidemos también de los demás que también desean estar en la presencia del Rey, con las manos y el corazón limpios

## Reflection On Psalm 24

God has created the opportunity for us to have hope in Him, and for this hope to be visible in our lives. We find this visible effect in Psalm 24, which should be the purpose of each one of us in every day of our lives. It should be the reason and longing of every day as we wake up each morning, desiring to have our hands and hearts clean for Him.

We can also mention that this psalm means that one belongs to God and lives for God in actions, decisions, emotions and with all one's heart, soul and strength. This means and shows that no one can claim to have grown in holiness without having grown in happiness, joy, and delight in God and the things of God, in love and solidarity with one another.

For a long time, we have been told about the importance of keeping our hands clean for health reasons, and we have been invited and even compelled to do so to prevent infections. Therefore, Psalm 24 invites us to have clean hands for action and a clean heart to harbor good intentions toward those around us. Being clean allows us to approach the King of glory, free from spreading harm to others, and to have a heart aligned with the love of Christ for all, with justice and love.

In the way we take care of ourselves, let us also take care of others who also desire to be in the presence of the King, with clean hands and hearts to love and enjoy a genuine relationship with the Father. May we

para amar y disfrutar de una relación genuina con el Padre. Que todos busquemos Su rostro y, sobre todo, busquemos hacer sonreír al Rey de Reyes y Señor de Señores.

*Amado Padre celestial, anhelamos estar ante tu presencia, con manos y corazones limpios para juntos acercarnos ante tu presencia con corazones sinceros que accionen al amor con los mas necesitamos, ayúdanos a mostrar que ante tu presencia hay felicidad, gozo y deleite.*

all seek His face and, above all, seek to make the King of Kings and Lord of Lords smile.

*Beloved heavenly Father, we long to be in your presence, with clean hands and hearts to come together in your presence with sincere hearts that act in love with those in need, help us to show that in your presence there is happiness, joy and delight.*

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La Rev. Zulema Garcia de Rojas es venezolana, teóloga, y pastora de una nueva comunidad de adoración para Hispanos/Latinos, llamada Iglesia Presbiteriana La Esperanza, ubicada en Atlanta, Georgia.



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Rev. Zulema Garcia de Rojas is a Venezuelan, theologian, and pastor of a new worship community for Hispanics/Latinos, called Iglesia Presbiteriana La Esperanza, located in Atlanta, Georgia.



# December 11

## We Will Sing a New Song *based on Psalm 40*

The first time I really “heard” Psalm 40 in a meaningful way was in the 1980’s at the Cow Palace in San Francisco, California. A few friends and I attended the band U2’s concert tour, *Sunday Bloody Sunday Tour* named after their hit song from their “War” album. I remember very vividly how U2 and Bono ended the concert with the song “40” which lifts most of the lyrics directly from Psalm 40. I remember it so vividly for two reasons. First, it was a time of great turmoil in the world, there were conflicts all around the world (Cold War globally and war in the Middle East) and the real threat of nuclear annihilation, it was a scary and uncertain time. At this concert U2 was singing about their experience of injustice, unrest, war and civil war, terrorism, atrocities, murder and senseless violence and the death of many innocents both Catholic and Protestant in Northern Ireland (does this sound familiar?). Second, the hopeful words of the song “40” echoed in my ears, in my mind, in my heart and in my soul as thousands of us exited the Cow Palace singing the words, “I will sing, sing a new song . . . How long to sing this song” It was a deeply spiritual experience!

Psalm 40 is broken up into two sections. The first section (v. 1-11) is a complex song of praise about God’s help. The psalmist remembers and proclaims,

“I waited patiently for the Lord: he inclined to me and heard my cry.” He goes on to state that God pulls him out of a pit of despair and miry bog and sets the psalmist on a secure rock to stand. Because of God’s action and deliverance, “many will see and fear and put their trust in the Lord.”

This first section precedes the second (v. 12-17) where the psalmist, David, articulates his need again for God to deliver and save him from “evils” and “iniquity” that surround him. Throughout the psalm, David continues to sing a song of trust and praise and anticipation of God’s coming deliverance and salvation.

Maybe you are facing hardships or feeling a sense of uncertainty with so much happening in the world (conflicts and wars and senseless violence). With all the difficulties that we face in life, Psalm 40 reminds us that as we wait patiently for the Lord, God will hear our cry. God will pull us out of despair, out of the pit, the miry bog that we find ourselves in and set us on firm footing.

Advent is a time of waiting and anticipating the celebration of the birth of Jesus our Lord and Savior who has and will put a “new song” in our heart, mind, and soul. Perhaps that “new song” will echo



the song sung by Mary the mother of Jesus known as the *Magnificat* (Luke 1:46–55) in anticipation of Jesus’ birth, and how his coming would change everything, as she and we proclaim “My soul magnifies the Lord, and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior . . .”

***Good and gracious God, be close to us and hear our cry, place a new song in our heart, mind and soul, a song of trust and a song of praise this day and during this Advent season. Amen.***



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**Rev. Dr. David Loleng** is the Director of Church Financial Literacy and Leadership at the Presbyterian Foundation and has over 25 years of experience in the PC(USA) serving churches in California as well as serving at the Presbyterian Mission Agency and the Presbyterian Foundation. He is the co-author of the three-part *Engage (Gospel, Discipleship, Mission)* curriculum and he speaks nationally and has written essays and articles on the topic of evangelism, disciple making, stewardship and generosity.

# December 12

Matthew 22:34-40

When the Pharisees asked Jesus which commandment of the law is the greatest, they were probably trying to trap him in his own teachings. They might have been preparing to suggest different commandments, if Jesus were to pick one (or more) to be greater than others. Jesus's response in this passage is astounding. Instead of picking one or two specific commandments and rules from the law, Jesus tells them of the two that combines the whole law and traditions: "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind." This is the greatest and first commandment. And a second is like it: 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.' On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets."

Society is often quick to judge which of us and our behaviors are better or worse. Then we—both intentionally and subconsciously—marginalize those who are deemed to be less. While we crave democracy and social liberty, we do not actually treat everyone equally. To us, some parts of the "law" seem more important than others.

Jesus teaches us that love stands above "all the law and the prophets." In our modern society those include social and political laws, familial and communal traditions, as well as personal ethical values. We are called to love beyond our comfort zone. We cannot love only those whom we like.

Jesus recognizes that the act of loving might not always be comfortable when he says to "love your

12월 12일: 마태복음 22:34-40

바리새인들은 예수님께 율법 중 어떤 계명이 가장 큰 계명인지 질문해서, 예수님의 가르침에 문제가 있는 것을 드러내려 했습니다. 예수님이 다른 계명보다 더 위대한 계명을 하나(또는 그 이상)를 꼽는다면, 그들은 다른 계명을 제시할 준비를 했을 지도 모릅니다. 이 구절에서 예수님이 하신 답은 놀랍습니다. 특정 계명이나 율법을 고르는 대신 예수님은 모든 율법과 전통을 아우르는 두 계명을 말씀하셨습니다. "네 마음을 다하고 목숨을 다하고 뜻을 다하여 주 너의 하나님을 사랑하라 하셨으니 이것이 크고 첫째 되는 계명이요, 둘째도 그와 같으니 네 이웃을 네 자신 같이 사랑하라 하셨으니 이 두 계명이 온 율법과 선지자의 강령이니라"

우리 중 누가 더 나은지, 우리 행동 중 어떤 것이 더 나은지, 사회는 종종 선불리 재단하고는 합니다. 그리고 나면 우리는 -의도적으로 그리고 무의식적으로- 열등하게 보이는 사람들을 소외시킵니다. 우리가 민주주의와 사회의 자유를 갈망하지만, 실제로 모든 사람을 동등하게 대하지 않습니다. 우리에게 "율법"의 어떤 부분은 다른 부분보다 중요하게 여겨집니다.

예수님은 사랑은 "모든 율법과 선지자의 강령"보다 위에 있다고 가르치십니다. 현대 사회에서는, 사회법과 정치법률, 가족과 공동체 전통들, 개인의 윤리적 가치가 이러한 것에 포함될 것입니다. 우리는 편안하게 적당히 사랑하라고 부름 받은 것이 아닙니다. 우리는 우리가 좋아하는 사람만 사랑할 수는 없습니다.

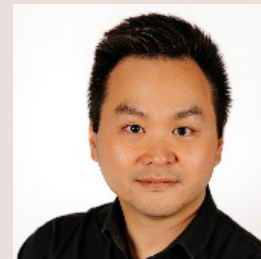
"네 이웃을 네 자신 같이 사랑하라" 하셨을 때, 예수님은 사랑이라는 행위가 어려울 수 있다는 것을 인정하십니다. 우리 개인의 편안함과 안위를 지나치게 중요시 한다면, 때로 타인

neighbor as yourself.” Sometimes, it is difficult to consider others, when we value our own personal comfort and safety too much. Other times, loving others feel unthinkable because we cannot even love ourselves. The idea of loving our neighbor as ourselves is a tall order that gets a little easier when we rely on one another to do the same. Isn’t that part of why we crave spiritual and religious connections through the Church, the body of Christ? Being part of the body of Christ helps us to love one another. Love is not a one-way street, but there are times when we need to be the ones to pave the way, as Jesus paved the way for love.

The question of who our neighbor is comes up frequently. What are the criteria of deciding who might be our neighbor? As we justify different qualifications of being one’s neighbor, I invite you to remember that on love “hang[s] all the law and the prophets.” Jesus’s commandments of love supersede all cultural and religious values. When love is placed above everything else, we no longer have ways to minoritize some of our fellow humans. The better question might be “who is not our neighbor.” It has a much simpler answer: no one.

*God of unwavering love, as we experience your love, help us reflect that unto others around us, near and far. Inspire us to make all our decisions according to the greatest commandments of love. Unite us as we rekindle our eagerness to welcome Christ in this advent season. Amen.*

The Rev. Dr. Daniel Siwon Lee is a recently ordained PCUSA pastor, currently service the people and the region of Willard-Mt. Zion Presbyterian Church in MO. He is also a concert violinist, actively performing and teaching around the world.



다니엘 시원 리 목사는 최근 PCUSA 목사로 안수를 받았으며, 현재 미주리주 윌러드-마운틴-시온 장로교회에서 지역사회를 섬기고 있다. 또한 콘서트 바이올리니스트로서, 전세계를 무대로 연주하고 가르치고 있다.

을 생각하고 배려하는 것은 어려울 것입니다. 우리가 스스로를 사랑할 수 없기에, 타인을 사랑하는 것을 상상하기 힘들 때도 있습니다. 이웃을 내 자신처럼 사랑한다는 것은 어려운 일이지만, 우리가 서로 의지하면 좀 더 쉽게 이루어 낼 수 있습니다. 이것이 바로 우리가 그리스도의 몸인 교회를 통해서 영적으로 종교적으로 서로 연결되기를 원하는 이유 중 하나가 아닐까요? 그리스도 몸의 일부가 된다는 것은 우리가 서로를 사랑하도록 돕습니다. 사랑이 일방통행은 아니지만, 때로 우리가 길을 만드는 사람이 되어야 할 때가 있습니다. 예수님께서 사랑을 위해 길을 놓으신 것 처럼 말입니다.

그렇다면 우리의 이웃은 누구일까요? 우리의 이웃인가를 결정하는 기준은 무엇일까요? 만일 여러분께서 이웃이 되려면 이런 저런 조건을 갖추어야 한다고 하신다면, 저는 여러분께 사랑이 “온 율법과 선지자의 강령이니라”라고 하신 말씀을 상기시켜 드리고 싶습니다. 예수님의 사랑의 계명은 모든 문화적 종교적 가치보다 위에 있습니다. 사랑이 모든 것보다 우선시될 때, 우리는 사람들 중 누구도 차별하지 않을 것입니다. 아마도 “누가 우리 이웃이 아닌가”라고 묻는 것이 나을 것입니다. 이 질문에 대한 답은 훨씬 간단합니다: 아무도 우리 이웃이 아닐 수는 없습니다.

변함없는 사랑의 하나님, 저희가 당신의 사랑을 경험할 때, 저희도 이웃에게 그 사랑을 전하게 하소서. 저희가 사랑이라는 가장 큰 계명에 따라 모든 결정을 내릴 수 있게 하소서. 이번 대림절에 예수님을 맞이하고자 하는 마음이 다시 불타게 하시며 저희가 하나되게 하소서. 아멘



# December 13

## Attendre avec Espoir (Psalm 33)

Attendre met à l'épreuve notre patience, une vertu sacrée, surtout lorsque nous sommes incertains de la durée ou du résultat. Combien de temps dois-je attendre ? Cette question résonne dans nos cœurs : Ca résonne à la fois dans la bible et dans notre vie quotidienne, comme le Psalmiste lui aussi s'est écrié : «Jusqu'à quand, Seigneur, regarderas-tu ma souffrance sans rien faire ?» (Ps 35:17). Nous aussi, dans notre époque contemporaine, nous nous écriions : Jusqu'à quand, Seigneur ?

En tant qu'immigrant, je comprends intimement le fardeau de l'attente, un voyage de foi et d'endurance. Je me rappelle comment les années s'écoulaient en attente de changer du visa de non-immigrant à un visa de résident permanent. J'ai attendu environ huit ans pour obtenir une carte verte. Ce parcours d'attente était marqué par des nuits blanches et la crainte imminente de l'inconnu. Il y avait des moments où ma force faiblissait et je remettais en question ma capacité à endurer. Peut-être avez-vous aussi une histoire d'attente similaire, où vous avez été contraint d'attendre pendant longtemps, moment où vous avez demandé avec ferveur à Dieu combien de temps encore vous deviez endurer.

Dans le monde rapide d'aujourd'hui, attendre est un défi spirituel. Notre culture prospère sur la gratification instantanée. Pourtant, la Bible nous rappelle que nous sommes appelés à attendre avec espoir, en croyant que Dieu répondra à nos prières et répondra à nos besoins. C'est ainsi que l'attente

## Waiting with Hope (Psalm 33)

Waiting tests our patience, a sacred virtue, especially when we are uncertain of the duration or outcome. How long do I have to wait? This question resonates in our hearts: It resonates both in the Bible and in our daily lives, as the Psalmist also cried out, "How long, Lord, will you look on and do nothing about my suffering?" (Ps 35:17) We, too, in our modern age, cried out: How long, Lord?

As an immigrant, I intimately understand the burden of waiting, a journey of faith and endurance. I remember how the years went by waiting to change from a non-immigrant visa to a permanent resident visa. I waited about eight years to get a green card. This waiting journey was marked by sleepless nights and the imminent fear of the unknown. There were times when my strength would falter and I would question my ability to endure. Perhaps you also have a similar history of waiting, where you were forced to wait for a long time, when you fervently asked God how much longer you had to endure.

In today's fast-paced world, waiting is a spiritual challenge. Our culture thrives on instant gratification. Yet, the Bible reminds us that we are called to wait with hope, trusting that God will answer our prayers and meet our needs. This is how waiting becomes a spiritual practice, rooted in hope built on what God has done in the past, appreciating the present and trusting in what God will do in the future. This reflects the approach of the Psalmist who speaks



devient une pratique spirituelle, enracinée dans l'espoir bâti sur ce que Dieu a fait dans le passé, en appréciant le présent et en ayant confiance en ce que Dieu fera à l'avenir. Cela reflète l'approche du Psalmiste qui parle à propos de trouver l'espoir dans les actions passées de Dieu. Dieu a sauvé les gens du péril, a fourni de la nourriture en temps de famine (v. 18) et les a nourris miraculeusement de la manne dans le désert. Réfléchir à ces actions passées nous donne l'espoir en tant qu'enfant de Dieu. Ces écritures nous rappellent que la fidélité de Dieu est permanente ; ce que Dieu a accompli dans le passé, Dieu est capable de le faire aussi dans le présent et le futur.

Bien-aimés dans le Seigneur, pendant que nous entrons dans cette saison de l'attente de la naissance de notre Seigneur Jésus-Christ, embrassons cette attente avec espoir et joie divine. Nous anticipons l'arrivée du Christ, qui vient apporter la paix, la justice et l'amour dans nos vies sacrées. En cette période d'attente, laissons nos cœurs être emplis d'espoir divin, car l'arrivée du Christ annonce un monde rempli de grâce divine et d'amour infini.

***Dieu de grâce, Dans cet espace d'attente, nous nous présentons devant toi, reconnaissant qu'il nous arrive parfois de manquer de patience pour attendre ta réponse. Nous te prions de nous accorder la force d'attendre avec patience. Que ton arrivée inonde nos cœurs de joie et d'espoir. Au nom de notre Seigneur Jésus-Christ, nous te prions. Amen.***

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about finding hope in God's past actions. God saved people from peril, provided food in times of famine (v. 18), and miraculously fed them manna in the wilderness. Reflecting on these past actions gives us hope as children of God. These scriptures remind us that God's faithfulness is permanent; what God has done in the past, God is able to do in the present and the future.

Beloved in the Lord, as we enter this season of waiting for the birth of our Lord Jesus Christ, let us embrace that expectation with divine hope and joy. We anticipate the arrival of Christ, who comes to bring peace, justice, and love into our sacred lives. In this time of waiting, let us let our hearts be filled with divine hope, for Christ's arrival heralds a world filled with divine grace and infinite love.

***God of grace, In this waiting space, we stand before you, acknowledging that sometimes we lack the patience to wait for your response. We beg you to give us the strength to wait patiently. May your arrival flood our hearts with joy and hope. In the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, we pray to you. Amen.***

# December 14

*Fa lozanareo, mpanora-dalàna sy Fariseo, mpihatsaravelatsihy! fa arindrinareo eo anoloan'ny olona ny fanjakan'ny lanitra; fa ianareo tsy miditra, ary izay miditra dia tsy avelanareo hiditra.*

*Matio 23, 13*

**T**antara kely anakiroa avy tamin'ny nosoratana sy nangonin'ny Mpitandrina Rafaralahimbola tao amin'ny bokiny hoe *Ary ianao mba ahoana?* No ampitahaina sy hakana ohatra eto

Ny fanahin'ny Advento no maniraka ahy:

## *Hitory ny marina*

“Lozanareo . . .” Im-pito miverina ny fehezanteny hoe “lozanareo, mpanora-dalàna sy Fariseo, mpihatsaravelatsihy!” manomboka eo amin’ny andininy faha 13 hatramin’ny faha 29. Tsy vitan’ny hoe maneho fanantitranterana fotsiny izany fa maneho teny mahitsy milaza zava-dratsy hiseho.

Tsaroako tamin’ny mbola kely rehefa avy maka sary tapaka dia tsy dia tena afa-po izany fa te hamerina haka foana ihany. “Ianao foana ion a soloina im-betsaka aza,” hoy I Dada mantsy ahy. Milaza ny marina ny sary. Firifiry moa ny olona tsy mety tena ho afa-po amin’ny tenany?

Miomana anaty advento aho; manao ahoana ny fahasahiako milaza mahitsy fa mampalahelo na hidiran-doza ny olona hitoriako teny? Manao ahoana ny fahasahiako manoloana ny *Fihavanana* Malagasy sy amin’ny hafa? Ny tena mpitory ny Filazantsara, dia izay sahy milaza mahitsy ny marina koa mba

*Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You shut the door of the kingdom of heaven in people's faces. You yourselves do not enter, nor will you let those enter who are trying to.*

*Matthew 23, 13*

**T**wo storytelling from the book *Ary Ianao mba ahoana?* (And what about you?) written by Pastor Rafaralahimbola will be here as illustration.


The spirit of Advent sends me:

## *To preach the truth*

“Woe to you . . .” Seven times the phrase “woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites!” starting from verse 13 to verse 29. It is not only an emphasis, but it is a direct statement of bad things that will happen.

I remember when I was young, after taking a broken picture, I was not really satisfied, but I always wanted to take it again. “You are always replaced many times,” my father said to me. The pictures tell the truth. How many people cannot be satisfied with themselves?

I am preparing for Advent; How dare I say frankly that the people I preach to are sad or in danger? How brave am I towards the *Malagasy Fihavanana* and to others? The true preacher of the Gospel is the one who dares to speak the truth so that people can turn



hahafahan’ny olona miala amin’ny lalany raha mbola velona mandre ny teny koa izy.

***Hanala ny saron-tavako***

“Mpihatsaravelatsihy”. Raha jerena ifotony ity teny *hypocrites* ity dia midika hoe ara-bakiteny hoe fanehoana tsara ivelany nefa hafa ny tena marina milafika. Saron-tava no kisary hanehoan’ny Grika ny hevitr’ity teny ity. Gagaga ity zaza iray fa nitomany nigogogogo ity rangahy iray. Adao hiaraka aminay sy neny ho izy. Handeha hijery cirque izahay. Hisy clown mpanao fampihomehezana aho. Izaho anie ilay clown hoy ilay lehilahy . . . Matetika no miaina sarintsarimpiaianana isika. Mety azo saronana hypocrites ihany ny tava ka fitahana ny manodidina. Ny Tompo sy ny tenantsika anefa mahalalany marina. Andeha hanatona ilay Andriamanitra namorona sy mahalala ny sandoka sy ny tsy fahatomombanantsika, Izy no hanamboatra ho tena mendrika Azy.

***Hampanandroso ny hafa ao amin’ny fanjakan’ny lanitra***

“. . . arindrinareo eo anoloan’ny olona ny fanjakan’ny lanitra; fa ianareo tsy miditra, ary izay miditra dia tsy avelanareo hiditra.”

Rehefa avy sitrana amin’ny fiainana sandoka dia tsy diso adiresy sady mampanandroso ny hafa hiditra.

Zazalahy kely mainty hoditra tsy afa niditra tao amin’ny fiangonan’ny fotsy hoditra, tao Afrika Atsimo. Nitorovoka nitomany teo an-tokonam-baravarampiangonana hono izy no nandalo teo Jesoa. Maninona ianao no mitomany?—Tsy afa miditra ao ampiangonana aho fa mainty hoditra, hoy izy. Mangina izany zandriko izany, aza misento na mitomany dia andao isika handeha fa na Izaho koa aza anie tsy ho ao!

Mamparikoditra ny nahita teto fa mety ho diso

from their ways if they are still alive to hear the Word of God.

***To remove my mask***

If you look at the root of this word hypocrites, it literally means that the outward appearance is good, but the real truth is different. A mask is the symbol used by the Greeks to express the meaning of this word. One child was surprised that one man was crying. Let’s come with me and my mother. We are going to see the circus. I will have a clown. I am the clown said the man . . . We often live a caricature of life. Hypocrites can only cover their faces and deceive those around them. But the Lord and we know the truth. Let’s approach the God who created and knows our fakeness and inadequacy, He will fix it to be truly worthy of Him.

***To promote others in the kingdom of heaven***

“. . . you set before men the kingdom of heaven; but you do not enter, and those who enter, you do not allow to enter.”

After recovering from a false life, do not miss the address and encourage others to enter.

A little black boy could not enter to the church of white people, in South Africa. It is said that he was crying at the door of the church when he passed by Jesus. Why are you crying?—I can’t enter the church because I’m black, he said. Be quiet, my little brother, don’t sigh or cry, let’s go, even I won’t be there!

It’s scary to see that people may have the wrong address. We are on advent, Are we “attending the

adiresy ny olona izay. Advento zao, “hiangona” aho fa tsy “hitangorona” fotsiny? Mponin’ny fanjakan’ny lanitra aho ka ny sitrapon’Andriamanitra no ataoko. Misesy ao anaty ny fanontaniana hoe: Inona no tena ifantohako? Ataoko “mahalala ny anaran’ny Tompo Jesoa” ny olona ka i Jesoa Kristy tokoa ve no ivon’ny toriana sy ny atao. Ny fahefana nomen’ny Tompo dia natao ho fahefa-manatona azy sy mampanatona ny olona aminy.

church” and just “gathering”? We are citizens of the kingdom of heaven and we do the will of God. The question is: What do I really focus on? I make people “know the name of the Lord Jesus” so Jesus Christ is really the center of what we preach and what we do. The authority given by the Lord is meant to be the authority to approach him and bring people closer to him.

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Renin’izy roalahy—Vaitra To, 7, sy Nahy To, 10—Mpitandrina voatokana aho, avy ao amin’ny FJKM nandritry ny 13 taona aho. Ankehitriny dia manohy Master in Theology ato amin’ny Columbia Theological Seminary, Decatur, GA.



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Mother of two young boys—Vaitra To, 7, and Nahy To, 10—Jihy is an ordained Pastor and has been serving the FJKM Church of Jesus Christ in Madagascar for 13 years. Currently she is pursuing a Master in Theology at Columbia Theological Seminary, Decatur, GA.

## December 15

**주**일 예배가 끝난 후에 하나님이 주신 은혜를 나누면서 아내와 함께 집으로 돌아가던 중에 길 반대쪽에서 힘겹게 차를 손으로 밀고 가는 한 남자를 보았습니다. '도움이 필요해 보이는데요?'라고 아내가 말했지만, 저는 그냥 지나쳤습니다. 그리고 잠시 후에 아내가 '오늘 설교한 대로 살아야 하지 않을까요?'라고 말했습니다. 그 말을 듣는 순간 부끄러움이 몰려왔습니다. 예배를 통해 하나님이 주신 은혜를 나누던 제가, 그 은혜를 선포하고, 하나님의 자녀답게 살아가고 성도들을 향해 도전했던 제가, 바로 몇 시간이 지나지 않아서 그날 제가 한 설교와 정면으로 대치되는 행동을 하고 있었기 때문입니다. 그런데, 그 아내의 한마디가 말씀 앞에 저를 다시 서게 했습니다. 말씀과 삶이 다른 저의 현실을 보게 했습니다. 하나님을 사랑하고, 그분과의 관계 속에서 살아가지만, 정작 그 말씀을 살아내지는 못하고 있다는 것을 깨달았습니다.

예수님의 탄생을 묵상하고, 다시 오실 주님을 기다리는 이 대림절에, 나의 삶은 어떤지 돌아보게 됩니다. 예수님을 믿고 따르는 그리스도인이라고 말하면서, 정말로 주님과 동행함으로 나의 일상 깊은 곳까지 그리스도인다운 삶으로 하나님 앞에 살아왔는지를 생각해 봅니다. 나도 모르는 사이 하나님 앞이 아니라, 내 인생 사느라고 하나님을 무시했을 수도 있기 때문입니다. 그리고 무감각하게, 내 삶이 맞다고 여기며 살았을 수도 있기 때문입니다. 나의 하루하루의 삶이 하나님과 더 깊은 관계 속으로 들어가 그분이 원하시는 삶을 살아가는 여정인지를 돌아보는 대림절이 되기를 소망합니다.

오늘 본문은 하나님의 말씀에 순종하기 보다는 자신들의 삶

**A**fter Sunday service, as my wife and I were making our way home and sharing the blessing God had bestowed upon us, I saw a man struggling to push a car by hand on the other side of the road. My wife said, 'Looks like he could use some help', but I just passed by. And after a while, my wife said, 'Shouldn't we practice what you preached today?' The moment I heard those words, it struck a chord within me and overwhelmed my sense of shame. Despite sharing God's grace through worship, proclaiming that grace, and challenging the believers to live as children of God, my actions contradicted my sermon earlier that day. But my wife's reminder brought me back to the Word and made me confront the reality of my disconnect between the Word and my life: I love God and live in a relationship with Him, but I am not really living the Word.

In this season of Advent, when we contemplate the birth of Jesus and anticipate His return, I find myself deep in introspection. While I say I am a Christian, professing belief in and following the path of Jesus, I am questioning whether I have genuinely walked alongside Him and embraced Christian existence in the depths of my daily life. Unwittingly, I might have strayed from God's presence by living life according to my desires rather than aligning it with His will. May this Advent season be a time for me to reflect on whether my daily life is a journey into a deeper relationship with God and living the life He wants me to live.

In today's passage, God addresses the people of Judah,



에 우선순위를 두는 유다 백성들을 향해, '네가 살아온 삶의 방식과 과정을 심각하게 생각해보고 돌아보라'고 말씀하시는 하나님을 보여줍니다. 그들의 관심은 성전재건이 아니라 자신의 집을 세우는 일에 있었습니다. 그러면서 그들은 아직 하나님의 성전을 지을 때가 되지 않았다고 뻔뻔스럽게 변명합니다. 그런 그들을 향해 하나님은 스스로를 돌아보아 깨달으라고 말씀하고 계시는 것입니다.

당시에 성전은 하나님과 그의 백성의 관계를 상징했기 때문에 중요했습니다. 성전에는 거룩한 하나님의 임재가 있고, 그 임재 앞에서 있는 하나님의 백성들이 있기 때문에, 또한 성전은 하나님과 그의 백성간의 깊은 언약적 관계를 유지하는 역할을 했기 때문에 중요했습니다. 그래서 백성들은 제사를 통해 거룩하신 하나님을 성전에서 대면했고, 성전을 통해 하나님과의 깊은 언약 관계 아래서 거룩하신 하나님의 임재를 경험하며 살아가도록 부르심을 받았습니다.

그런데 지금, 백성들은 그 하나님과의 관계를 뒤로 미루었습니다. 성전의 회복을 통해 하나님과의 관계를 회복하기 보다는 '스스로' 아직은 때가 되지 않았다고 말하고, 자신들의 삶에 우선순위를 두었습니다. 어쩌면 우리 역시 '하나님 지금은 아니에요.', '이것 먼저 끝내야 해요.'라고 그들처럼 하나님을 외면하고 있지는 않은지요. 혹시나 하나님과의 관계가 형식적인 관계에 불과한 것은 아닌지요. 도움이 필요한 사람을 무심코 지나치면서도 저처럼 '나는 하나님 안에서 잘 살고 있다'고 '나와 하나님의 관계는 좋다'라고 말하면서 스스로 위안 삼고 있지는 않은지 돌아보기를 원합니다.

대림절을 통해 '네 소위를 살펴보라'는 하나님의 말씀을 깊이 묵상하시면서 성전의 회복을 통해 관계의 회복을 이루기를 원하시는 하나님을 깊이 만나게 되시기를 소망합니다. 내 삶의 분주함을 멈추고, 삶의 우선 순위를 바로잡아 이제 오실 주님을 향해 우리의 신앙과 삶을 온전하게 하는 시간을

who prioritize their own lives over obeying God's word, 'Examine the way and process of your life and look back'. Instead of focusing on the restoration of God's temple, they were concerned with building their personal dwellings. They shamelessly excuse themselves by saying that it's not yet time to build God's temple. God's message to them is a call to self-examination to recognize their misplaced priorities.

At that time, the temple was important because it symbolized the relationship between God and His people. It represented a sacred space where the holy presence of God dwelled, and where the people of God could stand in front of His divine presence. The temple served a vital role in upholding the deep covenantal bond between God and His people. So, the people encountered the holy God in the temple through sacrifice, and they were called to live in a deep covenantal relationship with God, experiencing His holy presence.

However, it appears that the people have distanced themselves from this relationship with God. Instead of restoring their relationship with God through rebuilding the temple, they had told themselves that it was not the right time to prioritize their lives. This leads me to ask whether we, too, are turning away from God, saying 'God, not now' or 'I have to get this done first'. Is it possible that our relationship with God is merely a formal or superficial one? We must engage in introspection whether we are deceiving ourselves, claiming 'I am living well in God', or 'My relationship with God is good', even as we pass by those in need, just as I did.

My prayer for you this Advent is that, as you deeply contemplate God's words to 'give careful thought to your ways', you will encounter God who wants to

가지시기를 원합니다. 그래서 하나님을 아는 것만이 아니라, 무너지고 무감각한 우리의 신앙을 회복하여 더 깊은 하나님과의 관계를 누리며, 보다 깊은 관계로 나아가는 대림절의 시간을 보내길 소망합니다.

은혜로우신 하나님, 대림절의 시간 속에 저희 안에 무너진 영적 성전을 회복하길 원합니다. 무감각 하게 달려가는 우리의 인생의 길을 잠시 멈추게 하시고, 주님과 깊은 관계속에서 그분의 뜻을 발견하고, 그 뜻을 삶으로 살아내는 온전한 그리스도인이 되게 하여 주시옵소서.

restore relationships through rebuilding the temple. May we pause amidst the busyness of our lives to get our priorities straight, revitalize our faith, and steer our lives toward the One who is to come. May we enjoy a deeper relationship with God, restoring our broken and numbed faith.

*Gracious God, in this time of Advent, empowers us to rebuild the spiritual temple within us. Help us to pause in our numb rush down the road of life, enabling us to discern your will in a deep relationship with you. Guide us to become fully formed Christians who live out that will. Amen.*

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서종석 목사는 미국에서 17년 간 이민교회 목회를 하고 있으며, 현재 오클라호마에 위치한 로턴한인장로교회의 담임으로 시무하고 있습니다.



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Pastor **Seo Jeong-seok** has been pastoring an immigrant church in the United States for 17 years and is currently serving as the pastor of Lawton Korean Presbyterian Church in Oklahoma.

# December 16

Matthew 24:1-14

Jesus describes some of the signs of the end of the age in today's passage. These signs—wars, famines, natural disasters, etc.—are common around us, prompting us to wonder if we are near the end of the world. Every few decades or so, we see a self-proclaimed prophet who tells us that the world is about to end. Some of these prophets even give us exact dates. Some of them have claimed themselves to be the second coming of Jesus.

Regardless of what each one of us believes to be true, we can all agree that we live in a chaotic and confusing world. Depending on one's perspective, one might consider now to be the worse or better moment of the human history. The Secretary General of the United Nations António Guterres recently said, "The era of global warming has ended; the era of global boiling has arrived," describing the dire state of the global environmental health. More than ever, we experience climate fluctuations and extremes, perhaps reminding us of the approaching Armageddon.

There are some things we can do to help the situation and to lower our anxiety. Making certain choices might even slow down the process of global boiling. However, none of us can control when the end of the world will come. That is up to God and God alone. Perhaps this teaches us that our focus should be on what we can do, rather than what might happen.


12월 16일: 마태복음 24:1-14

예수님께서서는 오늘 본문에서 시대의 종말에 대한 몇 가지 징조를 설명하십니다. 이러한 징조(전쟁, 기근, 자연재해 등)는 우리 주위에서 흔히 볼 수 있는 것입니다. 그래서 우리는 종말이 가까이 왔는지 질문하게 됩니다. 수십 년마다 세상의 종말을 말하는 자칭 선지자들이 등장했습니다. 어떤 이들은 종말의 정확한 날짜도 이야기했습니다. 어떤 이들은 자신들이 재림 예수라고 주장했습니다.

무엇이 진실이라고 믿는지와 상관없이, 우리 모두는 우리가 혼란스러운 세상에 살고 있다는 것에 동의할 것입니다. 각자의 관점에 따라 지금이 인류 역사상 가장 나쁜 순간이라고 생각할 수도 있고, 가장 좋은 순간이라고 생각할 수도 있습니다. 안토니우 구테흐스 유엔 사무총장은 최근 "지구 온난화의 시대는 끝났다. 이제는 지구가 끓어오르는 시대가 도래했다"며 지구 환경의 심각한 상태를 지적했습니다. 어느 때보다도 우리는 기후 변동과 극한 상황을 경험하고 있고, 이는 아마겟돈이 다가오는 것은 아닐까 하는 생각을 불러 일으킵니다.

이러한 상황을 진정시키고 불안감을 줄이기 위해서 우리가 할 수 있는 일들이 있습니다. 전세계가 끓어 오르는 것을 늦추기 위해서 할 수 있는 선택이 있습니다. 그러나 우리 중 누구도 세상의 종말이 오는 시기를 조절할 수는 없습니다. 그것은 오직 하나님만이 하실 수 있는 일입니다. 아마도 이것은 우리가 일어날지도 모르는 일보다는 우리가 할 수 있는 일에 초점을 맞춰야 한다는 교훈을 주는 것 같습니다. 우리





We can redirect our energy to helping all of God’s creation—human and non-human creatures. Our hearts, minds, and actions towards our neighbor are choices that we can make. (The Calvinist in me would argue about that notion of free will, but that is not for today.)

The recent increase of violence in the Middle East has prompted a large number of Christians to presume an imminent end to the world. There are many convincing arguments from different sides of theological and political spectra in support of different theories, adding to the general anxiety of humanity. Many of us are still recovering from the effects of the global epidemic. Sometimes, things seem to get only worse. As we go through this season of Advent waiting for the coming of Christ—whether it is the celebration of the first coming or the actual second coming (or both)—we yearn for Christ’s peace in our anxious minds and troubled hearts.

I invite you to take a deep breath and (re-)invite the Spirit in your heart. Can you hear Jesus knocking on your door. Is your door unlocked? Do you have enough space in your heart to welcome Jesus? He’s the light that we look towards. The emphasis of being followers of Christ is not all on the destination, but the journey itself. In John 14:6, Jesus says, “I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life.” He does not say, “I am the destination, the final answer, and the end of life.” It is the process of life that is to be treasured. It is to be treasured because Jesus (through the Spirit) is accompanying us. He is with us through the times of turmoil and confusion, as well as those of celebration and jubilation. We do not know when the end of the age or Jesus will come back. Again, God has that

는 하나님의 모든 피조물, 즉 인간과 인간이 아닌 피조물을 돕는 데 에너지를 쏟을 수 있습니다. 이웃을 향한 마음과 생각, 행동은 우리가 할 수 있는 선택입니다. (제 안에 있는 칼뱅주의적 생각은 자유 의지라는 개념에 대해 논쟁을 벌이고 싶어하지만 오늘은 그 얘기를 하지 않겠습니다.)

최근 중동에서 폭력 상황이 심각해지면서 많은 기독교인들은 세상의 종말이 임박했다고 생각하게 되었습니다. 다양한 이론을 지지하는 신학적 정치적 스펙트럼의 여러 입장에서 수많은 설득력 있는 주장들이 나오고 있으며, 이는 인류의 불안감을 증가시키고 있습니다. 우리 중 많은 이들은 여전히 팬데믹의 영향에서 회복하는 중입니다. 때로 상황은 더 나빠지고만 있는 것처럼 느껴집니다. 예수님이 오시기를 기다리는 대림절을 보내면서, 예수님이 처음 오셨을 때를 축하하든 실제 재림을 축하하든(또는 둘 다를 축하하든), 우리는 불안한 마음과 괴로운 마음에 그리스도의 평화가 임하기를 간절히 소망합니다.

저는 여러분께서 깊게 심호흡을 하시고, 마음 속으로 성령님을 (다시) 초대해 보시기를 원합니다. 예수님께서 여러분의 문을 두드리시는 것을 들을 수 있습니까? 여러분의 문은 열려 있습니까? 여러분은 마음 속에 예수님을 맞을 넉넉한 자리가 있습니까? 그 문은 여러분이 기다리던 빛이십니다. 그리스도를 따르는 것이 강조하는 것은 목적지가 아니라 여정 그 자체입니다. 요한복음14:6에서 예수님께서 “내가 곧 길이요 진리요 생명이니”라고 하셨습니다. 예수님은 “나는 목적지고, 최종 정답이고, 삶의 종착지이다”라고 하지 않으셨습니다. 소중하게 여겨할 것은 삶의 과정입니다. 이것은 예수님께서 성령을 통하여 우리와 함께하고 계시기 때문에 소중합니다. 그분은 혼란의 시기뿐만 아니라 축하와 환희의 시기에도 우리와 함께하십니다. 우리는 언제나 시대의 종말이

covered. We do know that the Spirit of God is here already, in our hearts and minds and through our actions.

*God of peace and courage, we rejoice in the anticipation of being reunited with Christ. Strengthen us as we walk across this moment of darkness. Help us to focus on the Light of Christ amidst various shades of darkness. Amen.*

될지, 언제 예수님께서 다시 오실지 알 수 없습니다. 모든 것은 하나님이 하십니다. 우리는 하나님의 영이 이미 여기, 우리의 마음과 생각 안에 계시며, 우리의 행동을 통해서 여기 계심을 압니다.

평화와 용기의 하나님, 저희는 그리스도와 다시 만나기를 고대하며 기뻐합니다. 저희가 어두운 순간들을 잘 헤쳐갈 수 있도록 힘을 주소서. 저희를 도우사, 어두운 그늘에서도 그리스도의 빛에 초점을 맞추어 살게 하소서. 아멘

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**The Rev. Dr. Daniel Siwon Lee** is a recently ordained PC(USA) pastor, currently service the people and the region of Willard-Mt. Zion Presbyterian Church in Missouri. He is also a concert violinist, actively performing and teaching around the world.



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다니엘 시원 리 목사는 최근 PCUSA 목사로 안수를 받았으며, 현재 미주리주 윌러드-마운틴-시온 장로교회에서 지역사회를 섬기고 있다. 또한 콘서트 바이올리니스트로서, 전세계를 무대로 연주하고 가르치고 있다.



## December 17

**El árbol que nadie levantó**  
*basado en Amós 9:11-15*


Camino a casa, en la autopista, está el árbol caído que reverdeció sin que nadie lo levantara. Sus enormes ramas son impresionantes, al igual que su capacidad para resistir y perseverar. Es uno de miles de árboles que cayeron en Puerto Rico con el paso de los huracanes Irma y María en el 2017. La imagen post apocalíptica con edificios destruidos, carros ruedas arriba y árboles rapados por los vientos era tétrica y desalentadora. Comenzaron a flotar, como nunca antes en nuestra historia, las una vez censuradas banderas de Borinquen. Junto con las banderas en los carros, en los edificios y en las casas, vimos los árboles reverdecer, deslumbrándonos con la luz de la esperanza: un día también mi pueblo se levantará. Aún estamos en el adviento de esa esperanza.

Ha temblado la tierra, nos han azotado las plagas, nuestros príncipes nos han desolado y ya no tenemos la misma fuerza. ¿Habrà otro contexto más similar al de los profetas de Israel tras la caída de las murallas de la capital, la destrucción del Templo y la desolación del exilio babilónico? Quizás. Pero por mucho tiempo he sentido la frustración profética, la rabia de quienes ven la pobreza aumentar y a los poderosos enriquecerse y burlarse de la gente que sufre. Así como cada bandera alzada en el 2017 fue un clamor al cielo por levantarnos, le sigo clamando a Dios que restaure las ruinas destruidas.

**The Tree No One Lifted**  
*based on Amos 9:11-15*

On the way home, on the highway, there is the fallen tree that greened up without anyone lifting it. Its enormous branches are impressive, as is its capacity to resist and persevere. It is one of thousands of trees that fell in Puerto Rico after the Hurricanes Irma and Maria in 2017. The post-apocalyptic image with destroyed buildings, cars turned upside down, and trees shorn by the winds was gloomy and disheartening. The once censored Borinquen flags began to float, as never before in our history. Along with the flags on cars, buildings and houses, we saw the trees greening, dazzling us with the light of hope: one day my people too will rise. We are still in the advent of that hope.

The earth has trembled, plagues have struck us, our princes have devastated us, and we no longer have the same strength. Will there be a similar context to the one of the prophets in Israel after the fall of the walls of the capital, the destruction of the Temple and the desolation of the Babylonian exile? Perhaps. But for a long time, I have felt the prophetic frustration, the anger of those who see poverty increasing and the powerful getting richer and mocking those who suffer. Just as every flag was raised in 2017, there was a cry to heaven to lift us up. I continue to cry out to God to restore the shattered ruins.



Contrario a Amós, yo no quisiera que las cosas fueran como antes. ¡Nunca más! No veo el pasado con el romanticismo ilusorio de quien olvidó las proféticas señales de pecado y juicio que nos llevaron por el tren de la ruina fiscal. Solo suplico por esperanza en el advenimiento del Reino sanador, que restaure las escuelas, los hospitales, las calles, los hogares, las iglesias, los campos, los puertos y las oficinas de gobierno. ¡Un derramamiento de justicia y paz que haga retoñar el árbol que nadie levantó!

Hoy quiero creer. Puedo creer que nuestras esperanzas cautivas de la injusticia, la corrupción y la indiferencia puedan ser liberadas y reedificadas. Elijo creer que Dios nos hará reverdecer. ¡Necesitamos creer! Creer posible resembrar nuestros campos y reconstruir nuestras ciudades, levantar nuestra dignidad en alto, empoderándonos con la Brisa Fresca que embarazó a María y levantó a Jesucristo de entre los muertos. De Dios dependemos, como al árbol que nadie levantó.

*Dios de ternura y fidelidad, eres nuestra fortaleza constante en la debilidad. ¡Te alabamos y te damos gracias! Porque en medio de la dificultad no nos has abandonado. Libéranos de la resignación que consume, de la decepción que nos roba la esperanza y de la frustración paralizante. Enséñanos a esperar en tu fuerzas renovadas para reconstruir, para levantar, para sanar, para reverdecer. Muéstranos que, así como hay tiempo para esperar a que los vientos pasen, tiempo para levantarnos y tiempo para descansar del trabajo; hay tiempo para retomar el arado y seguir sembrando. Renuévanos, por tu misericordia. En el nombre del Niño que viene, el Emmanuel. Amén.*

Unlike Amos, I wouldn't want things to be the way they were. Never again! I don't see the past with the illusory romanticism of someone who forgot the prophetic signs of sin and judgment that led us down the train of fiscal ruin. I only beg for hope in the advent of the healing Kingdom, which will restore the schools, the hospitals, the streets, the homes, the churches, the fields, the ports, and the government offices. An outpouring of justice and peace that will make the tree that no one lifted flourish again!

Today, I want to believe. I can believe that our hopes, captives of injustice, corruption, and indifference, can be released and rebuilt. I choose to believe that God will make us green. We need to believe! To believe that it is possible to replant our fields and rebuild our cities, to raise our dignity high, empowering ourselves with the cool breeze that impregnated Mary and raised Jesus Christ from the dead. We depend on God, like the tree that no one has raised.

*God of tenderness and faithfulness, you are our constant strength in weakness. We praise and thank you! For in the midst of difficulty, you have not forsaken us. Free us from the resignation that consumes, from the disappointment that steals our hope and from paralyzing frustration. Teach us to hope in your renewed strength to rebuild, to lift up, to heal, to green. Show us that, just as there is time to wait for the winds to pass, time to get up and time to rest from work, there is time to retake the plow and continue sowing. Renew us, by your mercy. In the name of the coming Child, Emmanuel. Amen.*

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## December 18

**La luz del amor de Dios en la oscuridad del mundo  
(Juan 3:16–21)**

**E**l tiempo de Adviento sin duda alguna es una de las celebraciones más significativas y alentadoras del calendario litúrgico cristiano. Al igual que el tiempo de Cuaresma, esta época nos insta a tener un espacio para el recogimiento espiritual y a prepararnos mientras esperamos el regreso de Cristo. Esperar, es una de las disciplinas que más practicamos en nuestras vidas y es comúnmente en la que más fallamos, quizás por las dificultades que implica la espera. En muchas ocasiones, ésta se convierte en un castigo y nos mantiene a la expectativa. El tiempo parece detenerse, sentimos que la luz se apaga y que todo se convierte en oscuridad.

En medio de la oscuridad en la que vivimos a consecuencia de las conductas opresivas que continúan ejerciendo poder sobre las distintas minorías a nuestro alrededor, permanece la luz de Cristo. La palabra de Dios en Juan 3:16–21 nos alienta al recordar cuál fue el propósito para el cual Dios envió a su único hijo. La llegada de Jesús, fue para dar vida eterna, salvar y no para condenar. Cada vez que condenamos a una persona, a base de nuestro sistema de santidad, el cual necesariamente no es el de Dios, la llevamos a la oscuridad y no a la luz que disipa las tinieblas. Esa luz, la afirmamos los domingos de Adviento, al encender las luces de la esperanza, paz, amor y gozo. Proclamamos y anunciamos un tiempo de esperanza para las vidas que han sido marcadas por la oscuridad que ocasiona la indiferencia, la apatía y la

**The light of God's love in the darkness of the  
world (John 3:16–21)**

**T**he season of Advent is undoubtedly one of the most significant and encouraging celebrations of the Christian liturgical calendar. Like the season of Lent, this season urges us to have a space for spiritual recollection and to prepare ourselves as we await Christ's return. Waiting is one of the disciplines we practice the most in our lives and it is often the one in which we fail the most, perhaps because of the difficulties involved in waiting. On many occasions, it becomes a punishment and keeps us in expectation. Time seems to stand still, we feel that the light goes out and everything turns into darkness.

The light of Christ remains in the midst of the darkness in which we live as a result of the oppressive behaviors that continue to exert power over the various minorities around us. God's word in John 3:16–21 encourages us to remember the purpose for which God sent His only Son. The coming of Jesus was to save, give eternal life, and not to condemn. Every time we condemn a person on the basis of our system of holiness, which is not necessarily God's, we lead them into darkness and not into the light that dispels the darkness. On the Sundays of Advent, we affirm that light as we kindle the lights of hope, peace, love, and joy. We proclaim and announce a time of hope for lives that have been marked by the darkness caused by indifference, apathy, and hopelessness created by systems that oppress, hurt and enslave.

desesperanza creada por los sistemas que se encargan de oprimir, lastimar y esclavizar.

En la espera por el regreso de Jesús a buscar a su pueblo que le pertenece en su gracia y amor. Anunciamos que su luz sobre nuestras vidas no nos llevará a vivir en tinieblas, sino a vivir una vida de esperanza, empatía y solidaridad en la que se disfruta de la vida eterna. La vida que nos ofrece Dios a través de su único hijo, es una en la que somos libres de la condena y que nos invita a vivir en la luz que es Jesús. En esta época de Adviento, escojamos vivir bajo la lumbrera del unigénito de Dios y sigamos sus pasos para que así podamos vivir con esperanza en el amor que tiene Dios por el mundo.

*Dios de luz, vida, y salvación, te rogamos que nos sostengas en esta espera que desespera. Te pedimos que nos des las fuerzas que provienen de ti para poder anunciar tu libertad, tu amor y tu luz. Ayúdanos a ser instrumentos de tu paz mientras disipas las tinieblas que arropan a tu creación y lastiman a tus hijos e hijas. Gracias por tu gracia. En el nombre de tu hijo Jesús nuestra luz, oramos. ¡Amén!*

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In waiting for the return of Jesus to seek his people who belong to him in his grace and love. Let us proclaim that his light upon our lives will not lead us to live in darkness, but to live a life of hope, empathy, and solidarity in which eternal life is enjoyed. The life that God offers us through his only son is that of a life in which we are free from condemnation and invited to live in the light that is Jesus. In this Advent season, let us choose to live under the light of God's only begotten Son and follow in his footsteps so that we may live with hope in God's love for the world.

*God of light, life, and salvation, we beg you to sustain us in this time of desperate waiting. We ask you to give us the strength that comes from you to proclaim your freedom, your love and your light. Help us to be instruments of your peace as you dispel the darkness that envelops your creation and hurts your sons and daughters. Thank you for your grace. In the name of your son Jesus our light, we pray. Amen!*

# December 19

## **When the only thing we have is hope in God's grace and compassion based on Psalm 146**

When the people of the holy land, the homeland of our lord and savior Jesus Christ, are suffering constant death, injury, destruction, expulsion, starvation, oppression and cruel injustice; hope seems almost impossible. When world's leaders seem to fail us all terribly without compassion or regard for human life, hope seems to evaporate. In these times of hardship and turmoil, God is the only one who can give us hope. Psalm 146 provides solace and guidance when such times of turmoil bring us down and seem to leave us helpless and hopeless. We can find hope in God, because in Psalm 146:3-9 we are reassured;:

“Put not your trust in princes, in a son of man, in whom there is no help.

When his breath departs, he returns to his earth; on that very day his plans perish.

Happy is he whose help is the God of Jacob, whose hope is in the LORD his God,

who made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that is in them; who keeps faith forever; who executes justice for the oppressed; who gives food to the hungry. The LORD sets the prisoners free; the LORD opens the eyes of the blind. The LORD lifts up those who are bowed down; the LORD loves the righteous. The LORD watches over the sojourners, he upholds the widow and the fatherless; but the way of the wicked he brings to ruin.”

In the midst of the turmoil in Palestine and Israel, when world leaders do not do the right thing and instead encourage more suffering and death, our hope

in God becomes an anchor for the soul. Even amidst the most complex conflicts, His faithfulness endures, and His love brings solace. Let us hold steadfast to the hope that rests in the Creator of all things, as we seek peace and reconciliation in this troubled land.

***Dear Heavenly Father,***

***As we witness turmoil and suffering, our hearts are heavy with sorrow. We turn to You as our source of hope, recognizing that human solutions have fallen short. You are our help, and we wait in hope for Your guidance and peace.***

***In times of despair, we rejoice in trusting Your holy name, understanding that our hope is not in vain. Amidst the struggles, we ask for Your comfort and strength for those affected. May Your unfailing love be with them, as they put their hope in You.***

***Blessed God, our hope remains firmly in You, the Maker of heaven, earth, and all that dwells within. We seek Your grace, mercy and compassion to bring healing and resolution to Your Son's homeland and its people. In Jesus name we pray.***

***Amen***



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# December 20

## Pagsabot sa Kahadlok Ni Maria (Lucas 1:26–38)

**K**asagaran tubag sa mga kristohanon ug maghisgot kita ug kahadlok, moingon dayon kita “kulang ka ra sa pagtuo.” Tungod niini nga komento, daghang mga pagbati ang wala mahatagi sa sakto nga pagtagad. Kay sa pagsugod palang diha sa pagbungat sa maong pagbati, ato na dayon kining gi baliwala.

Sa pagkadawat ni Maria sa maong balita, mitumaw kaniya ang tawhanong pagbati, ang KAHADLOK! Alang sa usa ka yanong batan-ong babaye, ang gipadayag sa anghel, usa ka makahahadlok nga panghitabo. Manamkon ug maminyo siya sa sayo nga edad, ug labaw sa tanan ang kalisod sa kahimtang ug panginabuhi. Ang maong balita, usa usab ka hagit nga diin manamkon si Maria sa usa ka bata nga maoy mamahimong Hari sa kalibutan, ug ang iyang pagkagamhanan walay katapusan. Usa kini ka Maayong balita! Apan nasayod usab si Maria nga mamahimo kining hagit sa umalabot nga mga adlaw.


Ang maong balita nagdala ug kabalaka ug kahadlok tungod kay nasayod si Maria nga dili kini ordinaryong balita. Nagdala man kini ug mensahi sa paglaum, kabag-ohan, kalinaw, magtul-id sa mga hiwi nga binuhatan, maghatag ug kaayohan sa kalag ug sa lawasnong panginahanglan. Alang kang Maria, ang balita ikalipay sa kadaghanan labi na sa mga kabos nga sama kaniya, apan ikasubo sa pipila nga mapahimoslanon ug hakog.

## Understanding Mary’s Fear (Luke 1:26-38)

**W**hen Christians express their fears, it’s a common response to label it as a “lack of faith.” This tendency to attribute fear to a deficiency in one’s faith can lead to a troubling consequence—the dismissal and invalidation of genuine emotional experiences. It’s crucial to understand that fear is a universal human emotion, and it doesn’t necessarily indicate a deficiency in one’s religious conviction.

Consider the story of Mary, who, upon receiving the news from the Angel, experienced fear. Mary was a young woman facing overwhelming circumstances. The news of an unexpected pregnancy and impending marriage, coupled with socio-economic challenges, was understandably unsettling. Furthermore, she learned that her child would be a king with an everlasting reign, introducing political complexities and potential dangers.

Mary’s emotional response was a reflection of her reality and the struggles of her community. Her fear did not signify a lack of faith but rather symbolized the profound challenges faced by the poor, women, and youth like herself. Mary, as the chosen bearer of this good news, symbolizes hope for ordinary people and all women, highlighting their significant roles in advancing the kingdom of God on Earth as it is in Heaven. This good news is a message of hope, compassion and salvation for the marginalized, the



Ang pagbati ni Maria, angayan paminawan, ug sabton. And iyang kahadlok ug kabalaka nagpakita kini sa realidad sa iyang kinabuhi ug katilingban. Ang iyang kahadlok ug kabalaka, dili tungod kay wala siya mituo, kondili nagpakita kini sa lalom pa nga kalisod ug pag antus nga iyang nasinati tungod sa iyang pagkababaye, pagkabatan-on ug ingon nga anaa sa hut-ong sa mga timawa.


Sanglit, siya ang napili nga mahimong instrumento aron ang maayong balita mapadayag niadtong susama kaniya, nakita usab nato ang dakong tahas ni Maria diha sa kinatibuk-ang buhat sa Dios. Ang mga susama kang Maria mao ang sentro sa “maayong balita”. Sila ang katuyoan sa maayong balita. Kadtong anaa sa hut-ong sa mga timawa, ang unang magadawat niini. Timaan sa dakong kahangawa sa Dios sa mga timawa, sama ni Maria, adunay pasalig ang Dios! Nga taliwala sa kabalaka ug kahadlok ug kalisod sa kinabuhi, anaa ang Dios mag-uban Kaniya! Ang Dios nagpasalig kang Maria nga adunay ‘maayong balita’, adunay kalinaw, adunay kalipay. Ang Dios anaa kauban kaniya ug sa tanang katwhan.

Sa atong panahon karon, atong hatagan ug pagtagad ang mga pagbati ug kahimtang sa atong mga kaigsuonan. Ato untang hatagan ug pagtagad ang ilang pagbati sa walay paghukom. Ang ilang mga kabalaka ug kahadlok, dili tungod kay kulang sila sa pagtuo, apan hulagway kini sa realidad sa kinabuhi nga nagkinahanglan ug pagtagad ug solusyon. Karong panahona, atong tan-awon ang mga Maria sa atong katilingban. Ang ilang mga pagbati, kalisod, kabalaka ug kaguol dili angay kalimtan ug ebaliwala. Tagdon nato ang ilang gibati tungod kay alang usab kanila ang mensahi sa maayong balita sa Pasko. Ang Dios anaa usab kanila.

neglected, and the outcasts in society. It reveals that God cares deeply for the least fortunate members of the community. In Mary’s case, God reassured her of God’s presence and offered God’s peace, demonstrating God’s unwavering care.

In our contemporary world, it is vital to heed the emotions expressed by those around us, as they often reflect the profound struggles and pain experienced by our brothers and sisters in the community. We must actively listen to their hurts, challenges, and fears without passing judgment. These emotions do not arise from a lack of faith; rather, they stem from a genuine need for assistance and care. We should be ready and willing to provide the attention and support that is necessary. These days, let us pay attention to the Marys of our time. May we not ignore and neglect their emotions. May we not dismiss their experiences and struggles as a lack of faith but look deeper into them, for the good news of Christmas is for them, too.

*Loving God, You, who brought good news to all people and assured us of your comforting presence, we humbly thank you for the boundless love you pour upon us. We praise you for the good news of peace and comfort that you offer, extending your loving hand to those who are burdened with the weight of their fears and anxieties. Lord, help us to be more like Mary, who, in the face of fear, anxiety, and life’s trials, found her strength in your divine plan. Grant us the ability to listen attentively to those around us who may be carrying heavy burdens and experiencing their own struggles. Open our hearts, Lord, so that we may extend a compassionate ear, a helping hand, and a*



*Mahigugmaon namong Dios, Ikaw nga nagdala sa maayong balita sa kaluwasan, ug pasalig sa imong presensya kanamo nga imong katawhan. Salamat sa imong gugma, salamat sa imong maayong balita sa kalinaw, hilabina ngadto sa mga nangandoy niini. Tabangi kami sa pagpaminaw, sa mga katawhan nga susama kang Maria, puno sa kabalaka ug daw nakalimtan sa katilingban. Mahimo unta kaming instrumento sa kalinaw ug paghupay ngadto sa imong katawhan. Amen.*

*caring heart to those who need it most. Make us instruments of your peace, O Lord, just as Mary became a vessel of your good news. Fill us with empathy, patience, and understanding. We offer this prayer with hearts full of gratitude for your unending love and grace. In your holy name, we pray. Amen.*

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# December 21

18:1-20 رومزم

لأَبْحِ يَبِ تَقْدَحْ أَدَقَّ ٤: رشع نم اثل الرومزم لباتك لاق  
لأَبْحِ يَبِ تَطَاحْ ٥. كَالِهَلْ لُويْسُ يَنْتَعَزْفْ أَوْ، تِوْمُ لْأ  
تِوْمُ لْأ خُخَفِ يَلَعْ تَقَبْ طَأْ، ةِي وَا هَلْ أ

قرشلا ةقطنم رمت، تاملكلال هذه ةباتك تقو يف  
نانبل بونج نم ءزجو ةزغو ني طسلف ةصاخو طسؤال  
لالتحإل نلع أن دعب، ةبعص ةيسايسو ةينم فورظ  
برحل، ءانثأل هذه يف. ةزغ يلع ابرح يلي ئارسإل  
اهنإ؛ رانل قاطل فوقو مغر ةمئاق لازت ال ةي روسل  
بلاطي نم مهل سيل نمو شمهم لاوريق فال يلع برحل  
م. هقوقو حب

رين تحت انبوعش خضرت، صلخمل اءي جم بارتقإ عم  
ءال وُهَل ةبسنلاب. الصالخال نورظت ني اضيأ مهو ليقت  
يف تبتك تاملك درجم نم رثكأ رومزم لباحص تاملك  
م. لال مهعقاو يكاحت ةيح تاو لصل يه لب، يضا مل  
سقل تاملك ركذتأ، دال يمل نمزل دعست سن ام نيبو  
يحي سم ان» يف بتك يذل بهارل يرت م روتكدل  
نع يكحت ةي باتكلال دال يمل ةصق» نأ «يني طسلف  
رطضاو [يبعش لثم امامت [ءايحل نم مرخُ اصيأ لفل  
”هتايح يلع فوخلل

رربت ال طسؤال قرشلا ةقطنم اهب رمت يتل فورظل نإ  
لاق امكو، سكالابل لب، دال يمل لابل لافتحال نع عنانت مال  
اننكم مي، دي دحت لابل لالتحال لظ يف» بهارل روتكدل  
ت ي بجراخ عوف دم لال فطل رس لضفأ لكشب مهفن نأ  
يتأي هلل نأ وه دال يمل دي ع ةصق رسو بلق نإ.» محل  
يفو، زجاعو فيعض لفل لالخنمو يف ملع ال اذه ل

Psalm 18:1-20

The writer of the eighteenth psalm said: <sup>4</sup> The cords of death have beset me, and the torrents of destruction have terrified me. <sup>5</sup> The cords of the abyss surround me, and the snares of death close around me.

At the time of writing these words, the Middle East region, especially Palestine, Gaza, and part of southern Lebanon, is going through difficult security and political conditions, after the Israeli occupation declared war on Gaza. Meanwhile, the Syrian war continues despite the ceasefire; It is a war on the poor, the marginalized, and those who have no one to demand their rights.

As the Savior’s coming approaches, our peoples are under a heavy yoke and are also waiting for salvation. For these people, the words of the psalmist are more than just words written in the past, but rather they are living prayers that reflect their painful reality. As we prepare for Christmas, I remember the words of the Rev. Dr. Mitri Al-Raheb, who wrote in “I Am a Palestinian Christian” that “the Biblical story of Christmas tells of a child who was also deprived of life [just like my people] and was forced to fear for his life.”

The circumstances that the Middle East is going through do not justify refraining from celebrating Christmas, on the contrary, and as Dr. Al-Raheb said, “particularly in light of the occupation, we can better understand the mystery of the child being pushed

م. لظلاو لالتح الو او ةاسأ م لاطسو

م لالعلل يف رخأ ناكم نم نألا تاملكل هذه أرققت تنا ام بر  
عارصو برح يف شيعي ل ليخت كل بعصلال نم ودبيو  
يكل برح ةلاح يف شيعت نأ جاتحت ال كنك ل، رم تسم  
نأ لى لى تايئاصح إال ريشت. يناسن إال لاضنللا مهفت  
! ةم داص ةي تايح ثادحل اوضرعت دق م لالعلل ناكس نم ٧٠%  
ةبرجتو ةلاح وه يللق علو يف طاعللا لى لخالل عارصلال نا  
ة. يناسن إ

لو صو وه ربصلال غرافب هبقرت نو هرظت نن ام نكل  
ريغ نم ان نامي إ امو ءا ج رل، لم أال نم زوه ءي ج م ل نم ز. لم أال  
ءا ج ر

دَمَّ: رشح ةسداسللا ةي آللا يف اللئاق رومزم ل بحاص لم كمي  
لوي سأل نَم ي ن ل ش ت ن أ و، ي ن ك س م أ و ل ع ل ن م ه د ي ب ر ل ا  
«ة ر م ا ع ل ا»

ت نك ءاوس، ةاناعم ةبرجت ي أ زواجت ك لذ ب دصقأ الو  
دعي اذه ءي ج م ل لصف نكل، ةي ل قع وأ ةي فطاع وأ ةي دسج  
فوس هللا: ان دجي فوس لم أال! ان دجت فوس ةايحلل نأ ب  
قمع يف رهظ هللا نأل. لاضنللا لصاون نحنو ىتح ان دجي  
أم لظم ان ليل نو كي ال ي ل ل

رون ب انت م لظ ي رنل، ك ج هوب ان ي ل ايل رن أ: ةالاص  
ن ي م آ. ف ل ت م خ

out of Bethlehem.” The heart and mystery of the Christmas story is that God comes into this world in and through a weak and helpless child, in the midst of tragedy, occupation and injustice.

Perhaps you are reading these words now from another part of the world, and it seems difficult for you to imagine living in war and constant conflict, but you do not need to live in a state of war in order to understand the human struggle. Statistics indicate that 70% of the world’s population has been exposed to traumatic life events! Internal emotional and mental conflict is a human condition and experience.

But what we are waiting for and impatiently awaiting is the arrival of hope. Advent is a time of hope. And what is our faith without hope?

The psalmist continues by saying in verse sixteen: “The Lord stretched out God’s hand from on high and took hold of me and drew me out of the overwhelming floods.”

And I am not suggesting to spiritually bypass any experience of suffering, whether physical, emotional, or mental, but this Advent season promises that life will find us; Hope will find us; God will find us even as we continue to struggle. Because God appeared deep in the night so that our night would not be dark.

*Enlighten our nights with your glow, so that we may see our darkness in a different light. Amen.*

ىل ع ةن ي عم ةريزو اهنل. لصلأا ةي ن ان بل (ي ه) ر ق ش أال الور  
ي هو (ةي ك ي ر م أال ةدحت م ل تايالول) رت وي بم كل زاهج  
يف ءيش لك و قل لطللا ءاوه ل او صقر ل او اغوي ل اب ةفوغش  
(RYT 200) ةدمت عم اغوي ةبردم اضي أ ي هو. سفنللا م ل ع  
يف دي دج ةداب ع عم تجم وهو، Iama Yoga م ظنم و سسؤم و  
اي نروف ي ل ل اك، وت نم اركس



**Rola Al Ashkar** (She/ Her) is a native of Lebanon. She is a PC(USA) ordained minister, who is passionate about yoga, dancing, the outdoors and everything psychology. She is also a certified yoga instructor (RYT 200) and the founder and organizer of Iama yoga, a New Worshipping Community in Sacramento, Ca.

## December 22

Titus 2:11–3:8

Jidesie ezi ihe ike!” I ga-ejidesi ike n’ihe i na-  
Jekwuputa. I ga-edebe ya n’aka gi. Jide n’aka,  
dika ndi kwere ekwe, ijidesi ezi-okwu ahu nke  
Okwu Chineke aka nke-oma, ma ghara isi na ya  
pua. Agbanwela mgbe o bula gbasara ya. Ekwela ka  
o hapu akuku ya - obulagodi obere akuku. Nogidenu  
na-ekwere ihe i kwenyere taa wee kwuputa na o bu  
eziokwu nke Okwu Chineke!

Atunyere ihe di n’iwu ahụ nke anyị nwere ike ileghara  
anya ngwa ngwa. Eziokwu ahụ bụ na a gwara anyị  
n’ebe a ka anyị jidesie ihe anyị kweere ma kwuputa,  
putara na ihe ndi a bu ihe anyi nweburu. A gwaghi  
anyi, “Gaa jide ya na nke mbu ya.” Mana a gwara anyi,  
“Jidesie ya ike.”


Ihe putara doro anya bu, “I nwere ya. I nwere ya  
n’aka gi. O bu nke gi!” Ihe Baijul na-akuzi na ihe  
chogochi Ndi Kraist a na-akuzi bu ihe nke gi. Enyerela  
gi ya. I nwere eziokwu nke i na-ekwuputa. Nke ahụ  
bu eziokwu, o bu onyinye sitere n’aka Chineke, di  
ka i maara, Chineke na-eji uzọ digasi iche iche enye  
ogbakọ onyinye ahụ. O na-eji nne na nna eme ya.  
O na-eji chogochi n’onwe ya eme ya. O na-eji ulo  
akwukwo Ndi Kraist anyi na ndi nkuzi na-asopuru  
Chineke eme ya. Chee echiche nwa oge ka O siri jiri  
otutu afọ nkuzi n’ime ulo, n’ulo akwukwo, na n’uka di  
ka uzọ isi nye unu ndi bu Ya onyinye nke eziokwu.

Titus 2:11–3:8

Hold fast to what is good!” You are to hold fast  
to what you profess. You are to keep it in your  
possession. Be sure, as believers, to take a good hold of  
that truth of the Word of God, and never depart from  
it. Never change with regard to it. Do not even let go  
of part of it – not even a small part. Keep on believing  
what today you believe and confess to be the truth of  
the Word of God!

Something is implied in that command which we  
could easily overlook. The fact that we are told here  
to hold fast to what we believe and confess means  
that these are things that we already possess. We are  
not told, “Go out and get a hold of it for the very first  
time.” But we are told, “Hold fast to it.”

The clear implication is, “You have it. You have it in  
your possession. It’s yours!” What the Bible teaches  
and what this Christian church teaches is something  
that belongs to you. It has been given to you. You  
possess the truth that you confess. That is true, it is a  
gift from God, as you know, God uses various means  
to give that gift to the church. He uses parents to do  
that. He uses the church itself to do that. He uses our  
Christian schools and godly schoolteachers to do that.  
Just consider for a moment how He has used many  
years of instruction in the home, in school, and in



Ihe Chineke nyere bụ onyinye dị oké ọnụ ahịa. Eziokwu ahụ bụ na o sitere n'aka Chineke kwesiri ime ka anyị ghọta uru ọ bara ka anyị wee jidesie ya ike.

N'oge na-adịbeghị anya, anọ m n'otu oriri ngụsi akwụkwọ nke otu nwa agbọghọ tolitere ịbụ onye ndumọdụ ebe a na North Presbyterian Church, ndị mụrụ ya arụwo ọrụ ha ma nọgide na-arụ ọrụ nke ịtọ ntọala ziri ezi nye ya, ọ nwetawokwa ezi nzulite. , Ọtụtụ n'ime anyị nọ n'ebe a ejiriwo nwayọọ n'omie Delyn ndụ nke okwukwe, ọ na-agakwa n'igwè ndị ntorobia na klas ndị ọzọ n'ebe a na ndị ntorobia anyị ndị ọzọ, ezisaghị m ya ozi ọma, ejighị m ekpere kpachie ya, n'ezị ejiji presbyterian. , Enyere m ya ọrụ n'ihu onye ọ bụla n'ime ndị na-eme ya ihe ọma, agwara m Delyn ka ọ 'Jisie ezi ihe ike' mee ihe ọma ọ mụtara n'ebe a na n'ụlọ n'afọ ndị a niile ma nọgide na-amụ ihe.

Na nchịkọta, ọ dighị ihe ịrụ ụka adighị ya na anyị na-ebi n'ime ụbọchị ndị siri ike, mba anyị juputara na nkewa ndorọ ndorọ ọchịchị, na anyị na-azọrọ ibu ọrụ anyị iji gboo ikpe na-ezighị ezi nke agburu, akụ na ụba, na ọha mmadụ. Ọ bụ oge na-akpọ anyị ịtughari uche na ịghọta nzaghachi anyị maka ihe ịma aka ndị dị otú ahụ. Enwere m olileanya na, ka ị na-eme, ị na-anụ okwu ndị a nke akwụkwọ-nsọ nke taa - otu m mere mgbe m bụ nwata, otu m na-eme ọbuna ugbu a. Okwu Chineke gwara gị: A na-ezipu gị maka ebumnuche. Enyere anyị ihe pụrụ iche, ihe dị nsọ.

“Na-akpọnụ ihe ọjọọ asị, jidesiekwanụ ezi ihe ike.” Oh, lee ụwa nke eziokwu dị oké ọnụ ahịa dị n'okwu ndị

church as a means to give the gift of the truth to you who are His.

What God has given is a precious gift. The fact that it comes from God should be enough to make us realize its value so that we cling to it.

Recently, I was at a graduation party of a young lady who grew up being mentored here at North Presbyterian Church, her parents had done their job and continue to do the job of laying the right foundation for her, and she had received a proper upbringing, most of us here had quietly modeled for Delyn a life of faith, she had attended youth group and other classes here with the rest of our youth, I did not preach to her, I did not smother her with prayers, in true presbyterian fashion, I gave her a charge in front of every one of her well-wishers, I charged Delyn to ‘Hold fast to what is good’ to the good she has learned here and at home all these years and continues to learn.

In summary, there is no question that we are living in difficult days, our nation is fraught with political divisiveness, and we are claiming our responsibility to address racial, economic, and social injustice. It is a time that calls us to reflect and discern our response to such challenges. I hope that, as you do, you hear these words of today's scripture — the way I did as a child, the way I do even now. God's words to you: you are being sent out for a purpose. We are given something special, something holy.

“Abhor what is evil and hold fast to what is good.” Oh,

ahụ. Na nchikota nke eziokwu nile na ezi ihe nile, na mmeri n'ebe ihe ojọ nile bu Kraist.

Ya mere, n'oge a, jidesie Kraist ike ma kpọọ ihe ọ bụla na-adighi asopurụ ya asi. Jidesie ezi ihe ike, Amen.

*Nna amara, nye anyị amara n'oge ọbibi nke a ịjidesie okwukwe anyị ike n'agbanyeghi ihe ịma aka na obi abụọ di ukwuu. Nyere anyị aka ijidesi ezi ihe ike. Amen.*

what a world of precious truth there is in those words. And the sum of all truth and all good, and the triumph over all evil is Christ.

So, this season, hold fast to Christ and abhor everything that dishonors him.

Hold fast to what is good, Amen.

*Gracious Father, grant us the grace this advent season to hold on to our faith despite all the challenges and doubts that abound. Help us to hold fast to what is good. Amen.*

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**Roderick Chukwuemeka Oji** bụbu onye ụka Presbyterian nke Nigeria. Ugbu a na-eje ozi di ka onye enyemaka pastọ na North Presbyterian Church na St Paul Minnesota kemgbe 2014, na-ekwusa ozi ọma, na-akuzi, na na-eduga ofufe. Ka ọ di ugbu a, ọ na-achuso ọkpukpo oku ibanye n'ozu oge nile na PC(USA).



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# December 23

**Salvation is through Jesus Christ alone  
based on Galatians 3: 15–22**

Some people see rules as an attempt to control them, others see them as a guide to how to live. These different perspectives account for many of the conflicts between parents and children and between God and humanity.

In this text, Paul was raising the question of why God even bothered to provide the law. The purpose of the law was to make people conscious of the sinfulness of sin (Galatians 3:19). By knowing what was wrong, the law served as a signpost to avoid sin and to take away the excuse of not knowing when we are doing wrong.

Does the law make us righteous then? No! Its function has never been to serve as a basis for justification. Rather, Jesus is the one who justifies us through faith in Him. Paul writes in Romans 5:1 saying, “Therefore, since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.”

Jesus fulfills the covenant relationship with God through faith. By establishing a relationship with Jesus, we earn the promise of sonship making us perpetually restored to God. This is the promise Jesus referred to in John 3:16, “For God so love the world, that He gave His only begotten son. That whosoever believes in Him, should not perish, but have eternal life.” Would you give your life to Jesus to earn this right of sonship? Remember God loves you and God cares. Now pray with me, this prayer of faith;

***God, may You accomplish what is in Your word  
In my life. I believe in Your son Jesus Christ that  
He died and rose again. Come into my life and give  
Me Your Holy Spirit. Help me with steadfast faith to  
Cling to Your son, Jesus Christ. Through Christ and  
In Christ name I pray. Amen.***



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**Rev. Bernard Nti** is the pastor at Westmont Presbyterian Church. He graduated from Pittsburgh Theological Seminary (PTS) and currently doing his doctoral program at University of Dubuque. Rev. Nti was also a chaplain resident for two years at the Veterans Affairs (VA) Healthcare System at Pittsburgh and went on to pastor two churches in rural Iowa, First Presbyterian Church, Brooklyn and First United Presbyterian Church, Malcom. He was born in Ghana where he was nurtured and raised and moved to United States in 2007. He is married to Edna Nti, a nurse with whom he shares an adorable son called Praise Nti.



## December 24

**E**l evangelio de Mateo nos narra la historia del nacimiento de Jesús. El autor nos dice que la madre de Jesús, María, estaba embarazada antes de su casamiento. Como es natural, José estaba confundido puesto que las tradiciones y leyes judías eran muy estrictas y severas en situaciones como estas. El dilema de José era comprender lo que a todas luces parecía incomprendible y mantener el honor suyo y el de María.

Narra el evangelista que mientras José ponderaba su situación recibe la visita en sus sueños de un ángel del Señor. El ángel anuncia a José que María llevaba en su vientre a un varón cuyo nombre será Jesús y cuya misión será salvar al pueblo de sus pecados. Finaliza el pasaje indicando que José se une en matrimonio a María.

Mucho se puede decir de esta lectura: si pertenece al género del mito, que levantan sospechas las circunstancias y la manera. Incluso hoy día se duda sobre la veracidad del evento. y la duda es común en círculos académicos.

En cierto modo se asemeja lo que narra el texto con lo que se comenta del mismo. Es decir, la duda es un elemento común. Tal como José parece dudar, hoy algunas dudan de la veracidad y naturaleza del nacimiento.

Tal vez, se nos olvida o pasa a un segundo plano, que la historia del nacimiento de Jesús ha superado dudas por sobre 21 siglos. Que la historia del nacimiento de Jesús debe de estar atada a su muerte y eventual resurrección.

**T**he Gospel of Matthew tells the story of the birth of Jesus. The author tells us that Jesus' mother, Mary, was pregnant before his marriage. Naturally, Joseph was confused since Jewish traditions and laws were very strict and severe in situations like these. Joseph's dilemma was to understand what seemed incomprehensible and to maintain his and Mary's honor.

The evangelist narrates that while Joseph was pondering his situation, he received a visit in his dreams from an angel of the Lord. The angel announces to Joseph that Mary was carrying in her womb a child whose name will be Jesus and whose mission will be to save the people from their sins. The passage ends by indicating that Joseph is united in marriage to Mary.

Much can be said about this reading: if it belongs to the genre of myth, the circumstances and the manner raise suspicions. Even today there are doubts about the veracity of the event. and doubt is common in academic circles.

In a way, what is narrated in the text is similar to what is commented on in the text. In other words, doubt is a common element. Just as Joseph seems to doubt, today some doubt the veracity and nature of the birth.

Perhaps we forget, or it passes into the background, that the story of the birth of Jesus has overcome doubts for over 21 centuries. That the story of Jesus' birth must be tied to his death and eventual resurrection.

Tal vez se nos olvida que la duda no es necesariamente mala ni carencia de fe. Simplemente, dudar es parte de nuestra naturaleza humana. Se duda cuando no se comprende algo, se duda cuando atestiguamos un evento imposible de entender.

Lo relevante y particular es que luego de una duda surge una oportunidad para comprender. José dudó y un ángel aclaró su parecer. No sólo eso, quería hacer lo correcto. José le contesta en la afirmativa a Dios y le dice: Señor te he escuchado y haré como me dices.

El sí que José le dice al Señor es lo que se espera del pueblo de Dios. Es el compromiso “de caminar por fe, no por vista”. No importa la situación, lo que se nos viene o la altura de la montaña que nos toque subir. El creyente sabe que el sople de vida los inspira, capacita y acompaña.

Tal y como José ayudará a Jesús en sus primeros pasos de su vida, así hace el Señor con su pueblo: nos alienta, nos brinda compañía, consuela y nos llena el camino de ángeles para que cuando tengamos dudas aclaremos nuestro entendimiento y continuemos perseverando en la jornada de fe que llamamos vida.

***Amantísimo Padre Celestial, quien nos enviaste a tu Hijo para que tuviéramos vida, te damos gracias por tus cuidados y provisiones. Pedimos Señor que nos hagas siervos fieles como lo fue José. Que podamos escuchar la voz divina cuando tengamos dudas y sobre todo que podamos hacer tu voluntad. Amén.***

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Rev. Dr. Luis José Ocasio Torres is a native of Puerto Rico and has lived in Tallahassee, Florida for the past 5 years with his wife and two children. He is currently pastor of First Presbyterian Church of Havana, FL.



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El Rev. Dr. Luis José Ocasio Torres es natural de Puerto Rico y desde hace 5 años reside en Tallahassee, Florida con su esposa y dos hijos. Actualmente es pastor de la First Presbyterian Church of Havana, FL.

Perhaps we forget that doubt is not necessarily bad or lacking in faith. It is simply part of our human nature to doubt. We doubt when we do not understand something, we doubt when we witness an event that is impossible to understand.

What is relevant and particular is that after a doubt there is an opportunity to understand. Joseph hesitated and an angel clarified his opinion. Not only that, I wanted to do the right thing. Joseph answered God in the affirmative and said, “Lord, I have listened to you, and I will do as you have said.

The yes that Joseph says to the Lord is what is expected of God’s people. It is the commitment “to walk by faith, not by sight”. No matter the situation, what lies ahead or the height of the mountain we have to climb. The believer knows that the breath of life inspires, empowers and accompanies them.

Just as Joseph will help Jesus in his first steps in life, so does the Lord with his people: he encourages us, gives us company, consoles us and fills our path with angels so that when we have doubts we can clarify our understanding and continue to persevere in the journey of faith that we call life.

***Most loving Heavenly Father, who sent us your Son that we might have life, we thank you for your care and provision. We ask the Lord to make us faithful servants as Joseph was. May we listen to the divine voice when we have doubts and above all may we do your will. Amen.***



## December 25

**H**ari ini, Tuhan menganugerahkan kita, apakah sendirian atau sekeluarga, bersama teman atau teman-teman, menyatu karena percaya, bersama bersyukur dalam jalinan kasih Tuhan karena diperkenankanNya menerima, merayakan dan menyaksikan penggenapan janjiNya, penyertaanNya kepada manusia dalam kehadiran Yesus, Mesias. Sekalipun kita sedang atau masih bergumul dalam hal pekerjaan, kesehatan tubuh, hubungan keluarga, atau kepergian anggota keluarga yang dikasihi. Beda, dengan tahun-tahun sebelumnya.

Natal, kita bukan hanya memperingati kelahiran Sang Jurus'lamat kita manusia yang berdosa dan menerima dan mempunyai kehidupan kekal bersama Tuhan. Tetapi, Natal adalah anugerah Tuhan bagi keluarga berkumpul untuk saling menjalin kasih, dan bersyukur bersama. Sekalipun pada saat-saat yang sama, pertemuan seperti ini bagi keluarga-keluarga yang lain belum terjadi karena satu dan lain hal, suasana Natal di hati kita terasa berbeda.

Kasih dan penyertaan Tuhan, janjiNya, dipenuhiNya. Tujuh ratus tahun sebelum kelahiran Sang Bayi Kudus, pada waktu bangsa Israel berada di ambang kehancuran, karena dosa para pemimpin mereka, nubuat nabi Mikha, bahwa Sang Raja Damai, Mesias akan lahir di kota kecil Betlehem.


“Tetapi mereka masing-masing akan duduk di bawah pohon anggurnya dan di bawah pohon aranya dengan tidak ada yang mengejutkan, sebab mulut Tuhan semesta alam yang mengatakannya.”  
Ayat 4

**T**oday, God grants us, whether alone or as a family, with friends or friends, united by trust, together thankful in the fabric of God's love for allowing Him to receive, celebrate and witness the fulfillment of His promise, His inclusion with man in the presence of Jesus, the Messiah. Even if we are or still struggle with work, health, family relationships, or the departure of a loved one. It's different, from previous years.

Christmas, we not only commemorate the birth of our Saviour sinful human beings and accept and have eternal life with God. However, Christmas is God's gift for families to come together to love each other, and give thanks together. Although at the same time, such gatherings for other families have not happened for one reason or another, the Christmas atmosphere in our hearts feels different.

God's love and inclusion, His promise, He fulfilled. Seven hundred years before the birth of the Holy Infant, at a time when the Israelites were on the verge of collapse, because of the sin of their leaders, the prophet Micah prophesied, that the Prince of Peace, the Messiah would be born in the small town of Bethlehem.

“But each of them shall sit under his vine and under his fig tree with nothing surprising, for the mouth. The Lord of hosts said it.” Verse 4



Janji Allah melalui Mikha, menggambarkan kehadiran Sang Mesias yang akan membawa damai sehingga tidak ada lagi perang, dan orang-orang dari berbagai bangsa akan berduyun-duyun datang ke Yerusalem untuk beribadah menyembah kepada Sang Raja Damai, mencari kehendakNya, dan akan diberikan dan dipakai untuk hidup bersama, menyelesaikan semua konflik manusia menurut jalan-jalan Tuhan, pengajaranNya, yang adalah FirmanNya.

Kehadiran Tuhan dalam kelahiran Yesus Kristus menyatakan kehadiranNya di dunia, penyertaanNya kepada semua orang percaya, kepada semua orang yang datang dan percaya kepadaNya, sampai kedatanganNya yang kedua kali untuk mendirikan KerajaanNya di bumi ini.

Dalam kehidupan kita, kita sering mengalami tantangan, yang mengakibatkan kita menjadi bersedih hati, kuatir, karena masalah pekerjaan, kesehatan, keluarga, keuangan, ataupun karena kedukaan, dll. Nabi Mikha memberikan kita kesaksian bahwa Allah kita setia dan DIA akan selalu menyertai kita, apapun yang kita hadapi. Terang Tuhan akan terus menerangi kita sehingga hal-hal yang membuat kita serasa terkurung dalam kegelapan akan menjadi terang oleh kasihNya, karena kita telah dilayakan untuk menerima terang Tuhan itu melalui Yesus Kristus, Juruselamat kita, yang kelahirannya sedang kita rayakan.

“Biarapun segala bangsa berjalan masing-masing demi nama allahnya, tetapi kita akan berjalan demi nama Tuhan Allah kita untuk selamanya dan seterusnya.” Ayat 5

***Ya Tuhan, Puji Syukur kami atas kelahiran Juruselamat kami. Syukur kami atas kasihMu yang begitu besar bagi kami, terang yang selalu***

God’s promise through Micah, describes the presence of the Messiah who will bring peace so that there will be no more war, and people of various nations will flock to Jerusalem to worship the Prince of Peace, seek His will, and will be given and used to live together, resolving all human conflicts according to the ways of God, His teaching, which is His Word.

God’s presence in the birth of Jesus Christ reveals His presence on earth, His participation to all believers, to all who come and believe in Him, until His second coming to establish His Kingdom here on earth.

In our lives, we often experience challenges, which cause us to become sad, worried, because of work, health, family, financial problems, or because of grief, etc. The prophet Micah bears witness that our God is faithful and He will always be with us, no matter what we face. God’s light will continue to enlighten us so that the things that make us feel locked up in darkness will be made light by His love, because we have been made to receive God’s light through Jesus Christ, our Savior, whose birth we are celebrating.

“Let all nations walk each in the name of their god, but we will walk in the name of the Lord our God forever and so on.” Verse 5

***O Lord, Praise our Thanksgiving for the birth of our Savior. Our gratitude for Your great love for us, the light You have always given us so that we have hope in You. We ask God, bless us with strong faith so that we are able to stand firm in our times of challenge. Anoint and use us with Your Holy Spirit so that we can contribute to the***

*Engkau berikan sehingga kami mempunyai pengharapan didalam Engkau. Kami mohon Tuhan, berkatilah kami dengan iman yang kuat agar kami mampu untuk berdiri teguh pada saat-saat kami menghadapi tantangan. Urapilah dan pakai kami dengan RohMu yang Kudus sehingga kami dapat turut menegakkan keadilan dan kebenaran, dan dapat menjadi perpanjangan tanganMu bagi mereka yang membutuhkan bantuan di manapun kami berada. Terima kasih, Tuhan, karena dalam merayakan Natal sekarang ini, kami kembali diingatkan untuk memaknai dengan sungguh-sungguh kehadiranMu di dunia ini melalui kelahiran Yesus Kristus, Sang Raja Damai. AMIN.*

*establishment of justice and truth, and can be an extension of You to those who need help wherever we are. Thank you, Lord, for celebrating Christmas now, we are again reminded to take Your presence in this world truly through the birth of Jesus Christ, the Prince of Peace. AMEN.*

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