

POETIC ANTICIPATION



Journey Through The Psalms During Advent

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BY:

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"Let your Psalms and your hymns be your food. You read in the Gospel about the Lord eating honey and fish; so too, in the food of the Word, take the honey and the fish. The honey is the sweetness of the Psalms; the fish is the sound of the preaching of the Church." ~Saint Augustine of Hippo~

PREFACE

Welcome to this journey through the Psalms, a sacred pilgrimage that intertwines the melody of the Psalms with the anticipation and wonder of the Advent season. As the world around us embraces the quietude of winter and prepares for the celebration of the miraculous birth of Christ, I invite you to embark on a contemplative exploration of the Psalms, a profound literary and spiritual treasure.

The Psalms have, for millennia, been a source of comfort, solace, and spiritual growth for countless individuals seeking a deeper connection with God. As we enter the Advent season—a time of longing, hope, and joyful anticipation—we find that the Psalms resonate with the very essence of our Advent journey. They mirror the yearning of ancient hearts for the promised Messiah, reflecting our own longing for the presence and salvation of Christ in our lives.



In this book, I have curated a selection of Psalms, carefully arranged to align with the themes and emotions of each week of Advent. Each Psalm is accompanied by reflections, prayers, and meditations to guide you through this sacred season of expectant waiting. Through the lens of the Psalms, I hope to enrich your Advent experience and deepen your connection with God, allowing you to find renewed hope, peace, joy, and love amidst the busyness and distractions of the world.

As you immerse yourself in the words of the Psalms, may you discover the timeless relevance and enduring comfort they offer, awakening a profound

sense of awe and wonder at the majesty of God and the fulfillment of His promises in the birth of Jesus Christ. May this journey through the Psalms during Advent be a balm for your soul, illuminating the path to the manger and nurturing a deeper intimacy with the One who came to dwell among us.

May this book be a companion on your Advent pilgrimage, guiding you toward the Christ-child and inviting you to truly celebrate the miracle of His arrival in the humblest of settings, where love, hope, and redemption intersect in perfect harmony.

In joyful expectation,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Joseph Franklin III". The signature is written in a cursive style with a horizontal line underlining the name.

DECEMBER 1

A PRAYER FOR RESTORATION:

PSALM 80:1-7



*Hear us, Shepherd of Israel,
you who lead Joseph like a flock.
You who sit enthroned between the cherubim,
shine forth 2 before Ephraim, Benjamin and Manasseh.
Awaken your might;
come and save us.*

*3 Restore us, O God;
make your face shine on us,
that we may be saved.*

*4 How long, Lord God Almighty,
will your anger smolder
against the prayers of your people?*

*5 You have fed them with the bread of tears;
you have made them drink tears by the bowlful.*

*6 You have made us an object of derision[b] to our neighbors,
and our enemies mock us.*

*7 Restore us, God Almighty;
make your face shine on us,
that we may be saved.*

Psalm 80:1-7 is a heartfelt cry for restoration and salvation. It is a prayer of desperation, seeking the intervention of God in times of distress and turmoil. As we reflect on these verses, we are reminded of our need for divine renewal and the hope that God's restoration brings.

The psalmist begins by addressing God as the Shepherd of Israel, acknowledging His leadership and care. The theologian Karl Barth beautifully described the significance of God as our Shepherd, saying, "God, who is the eternal Shepherd, tends and watches over us with love." Just as a shepherd guides and protects his flock, God leads and sustains His people with unwavering love.

The psalmist implores God to shine forth and awaken His might. They long for God's divine intervention and salvation. The theologian Dietrich Bonhoeffer wrote, "The prayer of the psalms is the voice of the Church, of the Body of Christ, of the people of God in need, crying out for the presence of God in every situation." In times of trouble, we can cry out to God, inviting Him to manifest His power and bring salvation to our lives.

The plea for restoration and the shining of God's face is repeated in verses 3 and 7. The psalmist yearns for God's favor and for the radiance of His countenance to be upon them. In this desire for divine restoration, we recognize our dependence on God's grace and mercy. The theologian J.I. Packer affirmed this truth, stating, "The ultimate reason for our hope is not to be found at all in what we want, wish for, or desire. The ultimate reason is that God is good and therefore worthy of our total trust."

The psalmist laments the anguish and suffering experienced by God's people. They acknowledge the tears and the mockery they face from their enemies. The theologian Charles Spurgeon offered comforting words in such

moments, saying, "God marks how we suffer, and notes every falling tear. It is blessed to know that when we grieve, He sympathizes."

Psalm 80:1-7 serves as a reminder that restoration and salvation are found in God alone. We are invited to lay our burdens before Him, trusting in His goodness and power. As we echo the psalmist's plea for restoration, may we find solace in the words of theologian Timothy Keller, who said, "Only when we are at the end of our strength, or ability, or ideas, or resources, only then do we find the God who was there all along." In our moments of desperation, we can find hope and assurance that God is present and ready to bring forth restoration and renewal.

As we reflect on Psalm 80:1-7, let us bring our burdens before God, crying out for His restoration and salvation. May we trust in His love and leading as our Shepherd. May we seek His face, knowing that in His presence, we find true hope and deliverance. Let us remember that God hears our cries, sympathizes with our pain, and offers us the gift of restoration through the saving work of Jesus Christ. O Come O Come Emmanuel.

DECEMBER 2

EXPECTATION FOR RESTORATION:

PSALM 80:1-7



*17 Let your hand rest on the man at your right hand,
the son of man you have raised up for yourself.*

*18 Then we will not turn away from you;
revive us, and we will call on your name.*

*19 Restore us, Lord God Almighty;
make your face shine on us,
that we may be saved.*

As we journey through the season of Advent, a time of expectant waiting and preparation, Psalm 80:17-19 speaks directly to our hearts. The psalmist has an expectation for God's restoration and salvation, an expression of our deep longing for God's intervention and the fulfillment of His promises. In these verses, we find hope and anticipation as we fix our eyes on the coming Messiah.

The psalmist's plea focuses on the person at God's right hand, the Son of Man whom God has raised up. These words echo the messianic prophecies of the Old Testament, pointing us to Jesus Christ, the long-awaited Savior. Advent invites us to reflect on the significance of Christ's coming, His birth, life, death, and resurrection. He is the one upon whom God's hand rests, the one who brings restoration and salvation to humanity.

Through Jesus, our hearts are transformed, and our desire to turn away from God is replaced with a longing to remain in His presence. The hymn "Come, Thou Long-Expected Jesus" beautifully captures this sentiment. The opening lines of the hymn declare:

"Come, Thou long-expected Jesus,
Born to set Thy people free;
From our fears and sins release us;
Let us find our rest in Thee."

As we sing this hymn during Advent, it serves as a prayer, acknowledging our need for Christ's saving grace and the restoration that only He can bring. It reinforces our longing for a renewed relationship with God, one that enables us to walk faithfully in His ways.

The psalmist's prayer continues with a plea for revival. They seek the restoration of their spiritual life, the awakening of their faith, and a renewed calling upon God's name. This echoes the Advent message of preparation and readiness for Christ's coming.

As we sing this hymn, we acknowledge our weariness and the longing for Christ's redemptive work in our lives. We invite Him to bring revival, to awaken our hearts, and to restore us to the fullness of our calling as His followers.

In this season of Advent, let us hold onto the expectation of restoration found in Psalm 80:17-19. May we embrace Jesus as the one at God's right hand, our Savior and the fulfillment of God's promises. As we sing hymns that express our longings and hopes, let them be prayers that lead us closer to the restoration, revival, and salvation that come through our Lord Jesus Christ.

DECEMBER 3

TRUST AND GUIDANCE:

PSALM 25:1-10



Of David.

*1 In you, Lord my God,
I put my trust.*

*2 I trust in you;
do not let me be put to shame,
nor let my enemies triumph over me.*

*3 No one who hopes in you
will ever be put to shame,
but shame will come on those
who are treacherous without cause.*

*4 Show me your ways, Lord,
teach me your paths.*

*5 Guide me in your truth and teach me,
for you are God my Savior,
and my hope is in you all day long.*

*6 Remember, Lord, your great mercy and love,
for they are from of old.*

*7 Do not remember the sins of my youth
and my rebellious ways;
according to your love remember me,
for you, Lord, are good.*

*8 Good and upright is the Lord;
therefore he instructs sinners in his ways.
9 He guides the humble in what is right
and teaches them his way.*

*10 All the ways of the Lord are loving and faithful
toward those who keep the demands of his covenant.*

Psalm 25:1-10 reminds us of the essential elements that accompany this sacred season—trust and guidance.

In the opening verses, David voices a profound trust in the Lord. This trust is reminiscent of the trust that the world had been waiting to place in the promised Messiah. Advent is a time to reflect on the trustworthiness of God's promises throughout history and to place our trust in Jesus, who fulfills those promises. Just as the psalmist sought refuge in God, we can find refuge in Christ, our ultimate source of hope and deliverance.

During Advent, we remember the birth of Jesus, who came to save us from our sins and offer us eternal life. Like David, we can appeal to God's mercy and love, asking Him to remember us according to His steadfast love. Through Christ, we find forgiveness and restoration. This season calls us to reflect on our need for forgiveness, repentance, and the renewing grace of God's love.

Verse 4 echoes the longing of Advent. David seeks God's guidance, asking Him to show His ways and teach His paths. Advent invites us to open our hearts and minds to God's leading. As we prepare for the coming of Christ, let us seek to know His ways and allow Him to teach us. Advent is an opportunity to deepen our understanding of God's truth, to learn from His Word, and to be transformed by His wisdom.

David recognizes the Lord's goodness, uprightness, and willingness to instruct sinners and guide the humble. In Advent, we celebrate the goodness of God manifested in the birth of Jesus. Through His life, teachings, and sacrificial love, Jesus demonstrates the way of humility and righteousness. As we embrace His teachings and follow His example, we experience God's guidance in our lives.

Advent reminds us of the loving and faithful nature of God. God's ways are characterized by love and faithfulness toward those who keep the demands of His covenant. In Christ, we find the fulfillment of God's covenant promises. As we reflect on the significance of Advent, may we embrace the loving and faithful nature of God, and may our lives be marked by obedience and devotion to Him.

During this Advent season, let us place our trust in Jesus, who came to save and redeem us. May we seek His guidance, surrendering to His will and allowing Him to lead us on paths of righteousness. As we reflect on God's great love and mercy, let us prepare our hearts to receive the joy and peace that the birth of Christ brings. May the assurance of God's faithfulness fill us with hope, drawing us closer to the true meaning of Advent.

DECEMBER 4

ADVENT'S CRY FOR RESTORATION:

PSALM 25:1-10



A psalm of Asaph.

- 1 O God, the nations have invaded your inheritance;
they have defiled your holy temple,
they have reduced Jerusalem to rubble.*
- 2 They have left the dead bodies of your servants
as food for the birds of the sky,
the flesh of your own people for the animals of the wild.*
- 3 They have poured out blood like water
all around Jerusalem,
and there is no one to bury the dead.*
- 4 We are objects of contempt to our neighbors,
of scorn and derision to those around us.*
- 5 How long, Lord? Will you be angry forever?
How long will your jealousy burn like fire?*
- 6 Pour out your wrath on the nations
that do not acknowledge you,
on the kingdoms
that do not call on your name;*
- 7 for they have devoured Jacob
and devastated his homeland.*
- 8 Do not hold against us the sins of past generations;
may your mercy come quickly to meet us,*

*for we are in desperate need.
9 Help us, God our Savior,
for the glory of your name;
deliver us and forgive our sins
for your name's sake.
10 Why should the nations say,
"Where is their God?"*

*Before our eyes, make known among the nations
that you avenge the outpoured blood of your servants.
11 May the groans of the prisoners come before you;
with your strong arm preserve those condemned to die.
12 Pay back into the laps of our neighbors seven times
the contempt they have hurled at you, Lord.
13 Then we your people, the sheep of your pasture,
will praise you forever;
from generation to generation
we will proclaim your praise.*

We often focus on the anticipation and joy of Christ's coming. However, the reality is that our world is still broken, longing for restoration. Psalm 79 reminds us of this brokenness and leads us to cry out for God's intervention and redemption. It is a psalm of lament, a heartfelt plea for restoration in the midst of devastation.

Imagine a small village nestled in the hills, surrounded by lush fields and vineyards. The people of this village lived in peace, until one day, enemy armies stormed in, leaving nothing but destruction in their wake. Homes were burned, crops were ravaged, and families were torn apart. The once-thriving village became a wasteland, a testimony to the brokenness caused by human cruelty.

In the aftermath of this tragedy, the psalmist cries out to God. They express their anguish and the overwhelming sense of despair felt by the community. The story of this village echoes the cry of the psalmist:

"How long, Lord? Will you be angry forever? How long will your jealousy burn like fire?" (Psalm 79:5)

In the midst of devastation, the people yearn for restoration. They recognize that their own sins and shortcomings have contributed to their current state. But they turn to God, not in presumption, but in humility, acknowledging that only He has the power to redeem and restore.

In Advent, we acknowledge our brokenness and the brokenness of our world. We look around and see the effects of sin, injustice, and suffering. Yet, we also know that Christ came to bring restoration. The story of the village reminds us of the brokenness that Christ entered into, the brokenness He came to heal. Jesus came to a world ravaged by sin, offering hope, redemption, and restoration.

As we reflect on Psalm 79 during Advent, we are reminded that Christ's coming is not merely a sentimental celebration, but a response to our deep longing for restoration. The story of the village points us to the brokenness of our world, while the story of Jesus points us to the hope of redemption.

The psalmist's cry for restoration in Psalm 79 resonates with our own cries for healing and renewal. This Advent, let us lift our voices in prayer, seeking God's restoration in our lives and in our world. Let us remember the story of the village and the story of Jesus, recognizing that in Christ's birth, death, and resurrection, we find the ultimate restoration and redemption.

In the midst of brokenness, we cling to the promise of Isaiah 61:3:

"...to bestow on them a crown of beauty instead of ashes, the oil of joy instead of mourning, and a garment of praise instead of a spirit of despair."

As we journey through Advent, may we embrace the hope of restoration offered through Jesus. May our hearts be filled with compassion for the brokenness around us, and may we actively participate in God's work of restoration. Let us remember that Christ's coming is the answer to our cries for restoration, and it is through Him that true healing and redemption are found.

DECEMBER 5

ADVENT'S CALLS US TO WORSHIP:

PSALM 100



1 Shout for joy to the Lord, all the earth.

*2 Worship the Lord with gladness;
come before him with joyful songs.*

3 Know that the Lord is God.

*It is he who made us, and we are his[a];
we are his people, the sheep of his pasture.*

*4 Enter his gates with thanksgiving
and his courts with praise;*

give thanks to him and praise his name.

*5 For the Lord is good and his love endures forever;
his faithfulness continues through all generations.*

As we embark on the Advent journey, Psalm 100 invites us into a spirit of worship and joyful celebration. It is a call to enter into God's presence with gratitude, recognizing His goodness, enduring love, and unwavering faithfulness. Let us weave the timeless truths of this psalm with the lyrics of a modern Christian song, as we embrace the anticipation and reverence of this Advent season.

The psalmist begins with an exuberant call to shout for joy to the Lord, extending this invitation to all the earth. This echoes the heart of the Advent season, as we prepare to celebrate the birth of Jesus, our Savior. The modern

Christian song "Joy to the World (Unspeakable Joy)" by Chris Tomlin perfectly captures this sense of joyous worship, with lyrics that proclaim:

"Joy, unspeakable joy
An overflowing well
No tongue can tell
Joy, unspeakable joy
Rises in my soul, never lets me go"

As we sing these words, we respond to the psalmist's call to worship the Lord with gladness. We recognize that true joy, unspeakable joy, is found in Christ alone. Through His birth, we receive the gift of salvation, causing our souls to overflow with worshipful joy.

The psalmist also reminds us of our identity as God's people, created and cared for by Him. We are His sheep, and He is our loving Shepherd.

The Psalmist affirms our trust in Jesus, the Good Shepherd. He leads us, guides us, and protects us. In Him, we find true security and joy. This Advent, let us rejoice in the knowledge that we belong to our loving Shepherd, who cares for us with steadfast love and faithfulness.

The psalmist calls us to enter God's presence with thanksgiving and praise, acknowledging His goodness and enduring love. As we respond to this call, the modern Christian song "Great Are You Lord" by All Sons & Daughters resonates with the psalmist's exhortation:

"It's Your breath in our lungs
So we pour out our praise
We pour out our praise
It's Your breath in our lungs"

So we pour out our praise to You only"

As we sing these lyrics, we express our gratitude and praise to the Lord, recognizing that all we have comes from Him. Our very breath is a gift from God, and in response, we pour out our adoration and worship to Him alone.

Psalm 100 concludes by affirming the eternal goodness, love, and faithfulness of the Lord. The Psalmist declares a heartfelt recognition of God's enduring goodness, faithfulness, and unwavering love.

We too, should testify to the ways He has led us through difficult times and shown Himself to be faithful and true. This Advent, may we praise the Lord, breathe in our life from God's breath, and rest in the assurance of His love and faithfulness.

As we reflect on Psalm 100 during this Advent season, let us respond to its call to worship with joyful hearts. Through modern Christian songs that echo its themes of joy, gratitude, and reverence, may our worship be lifted to the Lord. May we enter into His presence with thanksgiving and praise, knowing that the Lord is good, His love endures forever, and His faithfulness continues through all generations.

DECEMBER 6

WAITING AND TRUSTING:

PSALM 40:1-5



*1 I waited patiently for the Lord;
he turned to me and heard my cry.
2 He lifted me out of the slimy pit,
out of the mud and mire;
he set my feet on a rock
and gave me a firm place to stand.
3 He put a new song in my mouth,
a hymn of praise to our God.
Many will see and fear the Lord
and put their trust in him.*

*4 Blessed is the one
who trusts in the Lord,
who does not look to the proud,
to those who turn aside to false gods.[b]*

*5 Many, Lord my God,
are the wonders you have done,
the things you planned for us.
None can compare with you;
were I to speak and tell of your deeds,
they would be too many to declare.*

Psalm 40:1-5 beautifully captures the experience of waiting patiently for the Lord and the assurance that He hears our cries. As we journey through

the Advent season, these verses invite us to reflect on the themes of waiting, deliverance, and trust. Alongside these timeless truths, we can draw inspiration from the words of a beloved children's book that echoes the message of hope and trust found within the psalm.

The psalmist begins by declaring their patient wait for the Lord, acknowledging that He turned and heard their cry. Advent is a season of anticipation and waiting, mirroring the centuries-long wait for the promised Messiah. It reminds us of the importance of cultivating patience in our own lives as we trust in God's perfect timing. In the words of A.A. Milne from "Winnie-the-Pooh":

"Rivers know this: there is no hurry. We shall get there someday."

Just as Winnie-the-Pooh reminds us of the value of patience, the psalmist's experience teaches us that God is faithful to act in His perfect time. As we journey through Advent, may we find solace in the knowledge that the Lord hears our cries, even when it seems like His response is delayed.

The psalmist vividly describes being lifted out of the slimy pit, the mud and mire, and being placed on solid ground by the Lord. Advent is a season that reminds us of God's redemptive work through Jesus Christ. It is a time to reflect on the ultimate deliverance accomplished through the birth, life, death, and resurrection of Jesus.

As we journey through Advent, let us remember that through Jesus, we have been lifted out of the depths of sin and given a firm foundation on which to stand. We can move forward with hope and confidence, trusting in God's faithfulness and the plans He has for us.

The psalmist's deliverance leads to a new song of praise to God, which resonates with the hearts of all who witness it. Advent invites us to join in this song, singing the praises of our Savior who brings light into the darkness. Inspired by the words of "The Velveteen Rabbit" by Margery Williams, we are reminded:

"Real isn't how you are made. It's a thing that happens to you. When a child loves you for a long, long time, not just to play with, but really loves you, then you become Real."

As we enter into this Advent season, may our hearts be filled with the genuine love for Jesus, the One who became Real to us through His sacrificial love. May our lives become a new song of praise and adoration, pointing others to the transformative power of God's love.

In conclusion, as we reflect on Psalm 40:1-5 during this Advent season, let us hold onto the childlike wonder and wisdom found in the words of a beloved children's book. May we embrace the patience that waits on the Lord, the deliverance He brings, and the trust that is born out of His faithfulness. Let us join the psalmist in declaring the wonders of God and allowing our lives to become a testimony to His goodness.

DECEMBER 7

THIRSTING FOR GOD'S PRESENCE:

PSALM 42:1-2



*1 As the deer pants for streams of water,
so my soul pants for you, my God.
2 My soul thirsts for God, for the living God.
When can I go and meet with God?*

Psalm 42:1-2 vividly expresses the deep longing and thirst for God's presence. It paints a beautiful picture of a deer desperately seeking water and compares it to the psalmist's soul yearning for God. As we journey through the season of Advent, let us explore a story that reflects the thirst for God's presence found in Psalm 42.

In the early 16th century, Martin Luther, a German monk, theologian, and key figure in the Protestant Reformation, experienced a profound thirst for God's presence. Luther was deeply devoted to his faith and sought to find peace and assurance in his relationship with God.

During his studies, Luther came across a Bible that contained the complete text of Scripture, including the book of Psalms. As he read Psalm 42:1-2, he resonated with the psalmist's words. Luther found himself longing for a personal encounter with the living God, just as the deer longs for streams of water to quench its thirst.

At the time, the dominant religious practices emphasized earning salvation through good works and rituals. This left Luther feeling spiritually parched, as he realized that no amount of human effort could satisfy the thirst of his soul. He

yearned for a deeper understanding of God's grace and a genuine encounter with the living God.

Luther's thirst for God led him to embark on a transformative journey of spiritual discovery. Through his study of Scripture, particularly the writings of the Apostle Paul, he began to grasp the truth of salvation by grace through faith in Christ alone. Luther's understanding of God's grace and forgiveness ignited a spiritual revolution that shaped the course of Christianity.

As Advent invites us to reflect on our longing for God's presence, we can learn from Luther's story. Just as he thirsted for a genuine encounter with the living God, we too can recognize our own spiritual thirst. Like Luther, we may find ourselves surrounded by religious practices that fall short of quenching our deepest longing for a relationship with God.

The story of Luther's spiritual journey reminds us that Advent is not simply a season of waiting for the celebration of Christ's birth; it is an opportunity to prepare our hearts for a personal encounter with the living God. As we reflect on Psalm 42:1-2, may we allow our souls to thirst for God's presence, desiring to meet with Him and experience His transformative power in our lives.

During this Advent season, let us follow in Luther's footsteps and seek a deeper understanding of God's grace, love, and forgiveness. May we move beyond empty rituals and religious practices and yearn for an authentic relationship with the living God. As we thirst for His presence, let us prepare our hearts to encounter Him afresh, finding true fulfillment and satisfaction in His abundant love and grace.

In the midst of our busy lives and the distractions of the world, let us take intentional steps to meet with God. Through prayer, Scripture study, worship, and fellowship with other believers, we can create space for the living God to speak to our hearts and satisfy our souls.

As we journey through Advent, may our souls pant for God as the deer pants for streams of water. May we seek Him wholeheartedly, finding the fulfillment of our deepest longings in His presence. And may our encounters with the living God during this season of anticipation and reflection bring us joy, peace, and transformation that extends beyond Advent and throughout our lives.

DECEMBER 8

FINDING REFUGE IN GOD'S PRESENCE:

PSALM 46:1-11



- 1 God is our refuge and strength,
an ever-present help in trouble.*
- 2 Therefore we will not fear, though the earth give way
and the mountains fall into the heart of the sea,
3 though its waters roar and foam
and the mountains quake with their surging.[c]*
- 4 There is a river whose streams make glad the city of God,
the holy place where the Most High dwells.*
- 5 God is within her, she will not fall;
God will help her at break of day.*
- 6 Nations are in uproar, kingdoms fall;
he lifts his voice, the earth melts.*
- 7 The Lord Almighty is with us;
the God of Jacob is our fortress.*
- 8 Come and see what the Lord has done,
the desolations he has brought on the earth.*
- 9 He makes wars cease
to the ends of the earth.*
- He breaks the bow and shatters the spear;
he burns the shields[d] with fire.*
- 10 He says, "Be still, and know that I am God;
I will be exalted among the nations,*

I will be exalted in the earth.”

*11 The Lord Almighty is with us;
the God of Jacob is our fortress.*

Psalm 46 is a powerful reminder of God's unwavering presence and strength in times of trouble. It assures us that, despite the chaos and uncertainties of life, God is our refuge and fortress. As we journey through the season of Advent, let us explore the profound message of this psalm and find encouragement in the words of Henri Nouwen.

In the midst of the challenges and turmoil we face, the psalmist declares, "God is our refuge and strength, an ever-present help in trouble" (Psalm 46:1). These words resound with assurance and hope, inviting us to find solace in God's unfailing presence. No matter the circumstances, we can trust in God's power and provision.

Henri Nouwen, a beloved spiritual writer, reminds us of the transformative nature of Advent in his book "Gracias: A Latin American Journal." He writes:

"Advent is the perfect time to clear and prepare the Way. Advent is a winter training camp for those who desire peace. By reflection, by silence, by prayer, by reading, by careful thoughtfulness, and by inner listening, we take time to scrutinize our lives and allow our souls to catch up with us."

Nouwen's words echo the essence of Psalm 46. Advent calls us to pause, reflect, and prepare our hearts to receive the Prince of Peace. It is a time to seek refuge in God's presence, allowing Him to transform our lives and grant us peace that surpasses all understanding.

The psalmist describes a river whose streams bring gladness to the city of God, the holy place where the Most High dwells (Psalm 46:4). This image

evokes a sense of refreshing and renewal. It reminds us that in God's presence, we find peace and joy that surpasses the circumstances of the world.

Nouwen further reflects on this transformative power, stating, "It is precisely in the desert of Advent that the longing for love is felt so intensely. Everywhere else, we are constantly tempted to be active, to do things, to perform, to meet people, and to possess others. But during Advent, we are forced to sit in the desert and to wait for God to come to us."

As we embrace the desert of Advent, let us heed Nouwen's wisdom. Rather than seeking fulfillment in worldly activities and pursuits, let us cultivate an inner stillness and wait upon the Lord. It is in the stillness that we encounter God's transforming love and experience the joy of His presence.

The psalmist concludes by urging us to be still and know that He is God (Psalm 46:10). Advent invites us to quiet our hearts, to pause from our busyness, and to acknowledge God's sovereignty. As we do so, we discover that true peace and hope are found in the presence of our loving Creator.

During this Advent season, may we find refuge and strength in God's unwavering presence. Let us heed the psalmist's call to be still, trusting in God's power and provision. And as Henri Nouwen reminds us, may we embrace the desert of Advent, allowing our longing for love to be fulfilled in the coming of Christ, our Emmanuel. In this waiting, may our souls find peace and joy, and may the transformative power of God's love be made manifest in our lives.

DECEMBER 9

A PRAYER FOR RENEWAL:

PSALM 51:10-12



*10 Create in me a pure heart, O God,
and renew a steadfast spirit within me.*

*11 Do not cast me from your presence
or take your Holy Spirit from me.*

*12 Restore to me the joy of your salvation
and grant me a willing spirit, to sustain me.*

Psalm 51:10-12 is a heartfelt prayer of repentance and restoration offered by King David. It reflects his deep desire for renewal and reconciliation with God. As we journey through the season of Advent, this psalm offers us an opportunity to examine our own hearts and seek God's transforming work within us.

In verse 10, David pleads, "Create in me a pure heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me." Advent is a season of preparation, a time to purify our hearts and align our spirits with God's purposes. Like David, we can approach God in humility, asking Him to cleanse us from our sins and restore our hearts to purity.

During this Advent season, let us examine our hearts and identify any areas that need God's transformative touch. Are there attitudes, behaviors, or thoughts that hinder our relationship with Him? As we pray the words of David, let us invite God to create in us a pure heart and renew a steadfast spirit within us.

In verse 11, David continues his plea, "Do not cast me from your presence or take your Holy Spirit from me." The longing to remain in God's presence is a central theme of Advent. We yearn for the closeness of God, recognizing that our sinfulness can separate us from Him. Yet, in His abundant mercy, God offers forgiveness and restoration.

This Advent, let us approach God with confidence, knowing that through Jesus Christ, we have access to His presence. We can trust in His unfailing love and rely on His Holy Spirit to guide and empower us. As we surrender our hearts to Him, we can rest assured that He will never cast us away but will draw us near with open arms.

In verse 12, David expresses his desire for restoration and the joy of salvation. Advent is a time of anticipation, as we await the celebration of Christ's birth and remember the ultimate sacrifice that brings us salvation. Like David, let us seek the restoration of our souls and the renewal of our joy in God's salvation.

As we meditate on these verses, may we open our hearts to God's transforming work during this Advent season. Let us pray for purity of heart, a steadfast spirit, and an unwavering commitment to God's ways. May we cling to His presence, relying on His Holy Spirit to sustain and guide us. And as we do, may the joy of our salvation be restored, filling our hearts with gratitude and praise.

In this Advent season, let us remember that God's desire is to transform us from the inside out. As we offer our prayers of repentance, renewal, and restoration, let us be open to His work in our lives. May this season be a time of deep transformation, drawing us closer to God, filling us with joy, and preparing our hearts to celebrate the birth of our Savior, Jesus Christ.

DECEMBER 10

A SONG OF ADVENT HOPE:

PSALM 85:1-13



*1 You, Lord, showed favor to your land;
you restored the fortunes of Jacob.*

*2 You forgave the iniquity of your people
and covered all their sins.[b]*

*3 You set aside all your wrath
and turned from your fierce anger.*

*4 Restore us again, God our Savior,
and put away your displeasure toward us.*

5 Will you be angry with us forever?

Will you prolong your anger through all generations?

*6 Will you not revive us again,
that your people may rejoice in you?*

*7 Show us your unfailing love, Lord,
and grant us your salvation.*

*8 I will listen to what God the Lord says;
he promises peace to his people, his faithful servants—
but let them not turn to folly.*

*9 Surely his salvation is near those who fear him,
that his glory may dwell in our land.*

*10 Love and faithfulness meet together;
righteousness and peace kiss each other.*

11 Faithfulness springs forth from the earth,

*and righteousness looks down from heaven.
12 The Lord will indeed give what is good,
and our land will yield its harvest.
13 Righteousness goes before him
and prepares the way for his steps.*

Psalm 85:1-13 resonates deeply with the spirit of Advent. It is a song that echoes the longing for restoration, forgiveness, and the redemptive work of God. As we journey through this season, we find hope and anticipation in these verses, anticipating the fulfillment of God's promises in Jesus Christ.

In the opening verses, the psalmist reflects on God's past faithfulness. They recount how God showed favor to the land and restored the fortunes of Jacob. Advent reminds us of God's faithfulness throughout history, culminating in the birth of Jesus. Just as God forgave the iniquities of His people, covered their sins, and turned from His wrath, we find forgiveness and redemption through Jesus, who came to reconcile us to God.

The psalmist expresses a heartfelt plea for restoration and reconciliation. They acknowledge the need for God's revival and the joy that comes from being in right relationship with Him. In Advent, we join the psalmist in yearning for God's restoration in our lives and in our world. We long for the renewal of our hearts and the joy of experiencing God's presence.

Verse 7 captures the essence of Advent. It is a humble request for God's unfailing love and the granting of His salvation. Advent invites us to open our hearts to God's love and grace, recognizing our need for His salvation. It is a time to reflect on the depth of God's love for us and to receive His saving grace with joy and gratitude.

To enhance our Advent journey, we can incorporate the hymn "O Come, O Come, Emmanuel." This hymn beautifully expresses the longing and

anticipation of God's people for the coming of the Messiah. Its lyrics resonate with the plea for God's restoration, His unfailing love, and the longing for His salvation. As we sing this hymn during Advent, let its melody and lyrics stir our hearts to eagerly await the arrival of Emmanuel, "God with us."

Verse 10 of Psalm 85 paints a captivating picture of Advent hope. It speaks of the meeting of love and faithfulness, righteousness and peace. In Jesus Christ, love and faithfulness converged perfectly. His life, death, and resurrection demonstrate God's unwavering love and faithfulness toward us. Through Jesus, righteousness and peace are harmoniously united. As we embrace Him, we experience His righteousness, which paves the way for lasting peace.

As we conclude our Advent devotion, we find assurance in the final verses of Psalm 85. The psalmist declares that the Lord will indeed give what is good, and the land will yield its harvest. Advent assures us that God's promises will be fulfilled. He will bring forth what is good and fruitful in our lives and in our world. We can trust that righteousness will go before Him, preparing the way for His steps, as we eagerly await the second Advent—the glorious return of our Lord Jesus Christ.

In this season of Advent, may Psalm 85 resonate in our hearts, reminding us of God's faithfulness, redemption, and the hope we have in Jesus. Let us sing hymns of anticipation, including "O Come, O Come, Emmanuel," as we prepare our hearts to receive the fulfillment of God's promises. May our lives be filled with hope, joy, and expectation as we await the coming of our Savior, the light of the world.

DECEMBER 11

THE SOURCE OF JOY AND SECURITY:

PSALM 16:1-11



*1 Keep me safe, my God,
for in you I take refuge.*

*2 I say to the Lord, "You are my Lord;
apart from you I have no good thing."*

*3 I say of the holy people who are in the land,
"They are the noble ones in whom is all my delight."*

*4 Those who run after other gods will suffer more and more.
I will not pour out libations of blood to such gods
or take up their names on my lips.*

*5 Lord, you alone are my portion and my cup;
you make my lot secure.*

*6 The boundary lines have fallen for me in pleasant places;
surely I have a delightful inheritance.*

*7 I will praise the Lord, who counsels me;
even at night my heart instructs me.*

*8 I keep my eyes always on the Lord.
With him at my right hand, I will not be shaken.*

*9 Therefore my heart is glad and my tongue rejoices;
my body also will rest secure,*

*10 because you will not abandon me to the realm of the dead,
nor will you let your faithful one see decay.*

11 You make known to me the path of life;

*you will fill me with joy in your presence,
with eternal pleasures at your right hand.*

Psalm 16 is a beautiful expression of trust, joy, and security in God's presence. As we journey through the season of Advent, this psalm invites us to find our refuge in the Lord and experience the deep joy that comes from knowing Him. Let us explore the message of Psalm 16 and draw inspiration from the words of St. Augustine.

The psalmist begins by seeking refuge in God, acknowledging Him as the source of all good things. St. Augustine beautifully reflects on this truth, saying, "Our hearts are restless until they find their rest in You." As we embark on the Advent journey, let us recognize that true joy and security are found in God alone. He is our refuge and the One who satisfies the deepest longings of our hearts.

In verse 5, the psalmist declares, "Lord, you alone are my portion and my cup; you make my lot secure." Advent is a season of anticipation and hope, as we await the coming of Christ. In Jesus, we find our portion and cup, our ultimate source of fulfillment and security. As we reflect on the psalmist's words, may our hearts be drawn to Jesus, who offers Himself as the bread of life and the living water, quenching our deepest spiritual thirst.

The psalmist expresses his delight in the holy people who are in the land, recognizing their noble character. In the context of Advent, we reflect on the communion of saints—the believers who have gone before us and those who surround us in the present. St. Augustine reminds us, "We are bound to one another by the grace of God." As we journey together, let us find joy and encouragement in the community of believers, delighting in their faith and allowing our lives to be intertwined in the shared pursuit of God.

As we keep our eyes fixed on the Lord and seek His counsel, our hearts are filled with gladness and our tongues rejoice (verse 9). Advent invites us to cultivate a posture of attentiveness and watchfulness, as we wait for the Lord's coming. It is in His presence that we find true joy and lasting contentment. As St. Augustine wisely advises, "Find out how much God has given you and from it take what you need; the remainder is needed by others." Let us embrace a spirit of gratitude and generosity, recognizing that our joy is found in God's abundant provision.

In conclusion, Psalm 16 offers a powerful reminder of the joy and security found in God's presence. As we journey through Advent, let us take refuge in Him, recognizing that true fulfillment is found in a deep and intimate relationship with our Savior. May the words of St. Augustine echo in our hearts, leading us to find rest in God and experience the joy that surpasses all understanding.

DECEMBER 12

THE SOURCE OF JOY AND SECURITY:

PSALM 19:7-9



*7 The law of the Lord is perfect,
refreshing the soul.*

*The statutes of the Lord are trustworthy,
making wise the simple.*

*8 The precepts of the Lord are right,
giving joy to the heart.*

*The commands of the Lord are radiant,
giving light to the eyes.*

*9 The fear of the Lord is pure,
enduring forever.*

*The decrees of the Lord are firm,
and all of them are righteous.*

Psalm 19:7-9 exalts the perfect and trustworthy nature of God's Word. It reveals the transformative power of His law, precepts, commands, and decrees in refreshing the soul, imparting wisdom, bringing joy, illuminating understanding, and enduring eternally. As we embark on the Advent journey, this psalm reminds us of the significance of Scripture in our lives. Let us explore its message and draw inspiration from an example in the movie "The Pursuit of Happyness."

In the movie "The Pursuit of Happyness," the main character, Chris Gardner, played by Will Smith, faces numerous challenges and setbacks as he

strives to provide a better life for himself and his son. Chris encounters financial struggles, homelessness, and seemingly insurmountable obstacles. Yet, he perseveres with unwavering determination and a deep sense of purpose.

Amidst his trials, Chris clings to a letter of inspiration and encouragement that he received from his wife before their separation. Though we never learn what was written in the letter, it becomes a source of strength, guiding him through the darkest moments and reminding him of his worth and potential. The letter serves as a personal revelation, offering hope and wisdom when everything seems to be falling apart.

In a similar way, Psalm 19:7-9 portrays God's Word as a perfect and trustworthy source of guidance and transformation. It refreshes the soul, imparts wisdom to the simple, brings joy to the heart, illuminates understanding, and endures eternally. Just as Chris held on to the letter from his wife, we can find solace and direction in the Scriptures.

During the Advent season, as we anticipate the birth of Jesus, the Word made flesh, we are invited to reflect on the power and relevance of God's Word in our lives. The Scriptures reveal God's character, His redemptive plan, and His unfailing love for humanity. They provide guidance, encouragement, and wisdom as we navigate the challenges and joys of life.

Similar to how the letter in the movie guided Chris, the Bible serves as our ultimate source of revelation and inspiration. Through its pages, we encounter the living Word, Jesus Christ, who brings hope, transformation, and eternal life. The Scriptures refresh our souls, offer trustworthy guidance, bring joy to our hearts, illuminate our understanding, and provide a firm foundation for our lives.

As we reflect on Psalm 19:7-9, let us embrace the Scriptures as a gift from God. Let us approach them with reverence and gratitude, recognizing their power to shape our lives and draw us closer to the heart of God. Just as the letter in the movie played a pivotal role in Chris's journey, may we allow God's Word to guide us, strengthen us, and empower us to walk in His ways.

In this Advent season, let us commit ourselves to dive deeper into the Scriptures, seeking the perfect revelation of God's Word. As we meditate on its truths, may our souls be refreshed, our hearts filled with joy, and our lives transformed. May the Scriptures illuminate our path and lead us to a deeper understanding of God's love, ultimately drawing us into a closer relationship with Him.

DECEMBER 13

FROM DESOLATION TO REDEMPTION:

PSALM 22:1-5



- 1 My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?
Why are you so far from saving me,
so far from my cries of anguish?*
- 2 My God, I cry out by day, but you do not answer,
by night, but I find no rest.*
- 3 Yet you are enthroned as the Holy One;
you are the one Israel praises.*
- 4 In you our ancestors put their trust;
they trusted and you delivered them.*
- 5 To you they cried out and were saved;
in you they trusted and were not put to shame.*

Psalm 22 is a profound expression of anguish and hope, capturing the depth of human suffering and the ultimate redemption found in God's faithfulness. As we embark on the Advent season, this psalm resonates with the anticipation of Christ's birth and the fulfillment of God's promises.

The opening verses of Psalm 22 paint a picture of abandonment and distress, mirroring the words of Jesus on the cross. In the midst of our own struggles and trials, we may find ourselves echoing the psalmist's cry, feeling as though God is distant and our prayers are unanswered. Yet, even within

the lament, there is a glimmer of hope—a recognition of God's holiness and the faithfulness He has shown to generations before us.

In the realm of country music, there is a quote from the song "Bless the Broken Road" by Rascal Flatts that resonates with the themes of Psalm 22. The lyrics, "Every long-lost dream led me to where you are; Others who broke my heart, they were like northern stars" reflect the journey of brokenness and pain that ultimately leads to a place of redemption and finding God's purpose. These words parallel the psalmist's acknowledgment of the trust placed in God by their ancestors, who experienced deliverance in their times of need.

As we journey through Advent, we acknowledge the deep longing for deliverance from the brokenness of the world. The psalmist's cry foreshadows Jesus' ultimate sacrifice on the cross—the ultimate act of deliverance and redemption. Through His suffering, Jesus bore our sins and brought salvation to all who believe.

In Psalm 22:24, we find a turning point in the psalm, proclaiming, "For he has not despised or scorned the suffering of the afflicted one; he has not hidden his face from him but has listened to his cry for help." This verse reminds us that even in our darkest moments, God does not turn away from our pain. He hears our cries and responds with compassion and love.

Advent is a season of anticipation, as we await the fulfillment of God's promises. It is a time to reflect on the birth of Jesus, who entered our broken world to bring hope, healing, and reconciliation. In the midst of our struggles, we can find solace in the assurance that God is intimately acquainted with our pain and actively listens to our cries for help.

In conclusion, Psalm 22 speaks of the depths of human suffering and the transformative power of God's faithfulness. It invites us to embrace the hope and redemption found in Christ. As we reflect on this psalm during Advent, may we find comfort in the knowledge that God is present in our pain and actively working to bring about our ultimate restoration. Let us remember the quote from the country song, which serves as a reminder that our broken roads and heartaches can ultimately lead us to a place where we find God's purpose and experience His redemptive love.

DECEMBER 14

FROM DESOLATION TO REDEMPTION:

PSALM 23:1-6



A psalm of David.

1 The Lord is my shepherd, I lack nothing.

*2 He makes me lie down in green pastures,
he leads me beside quiet waters,*

3 he refreshes my soul.

*He guides me along the right paths
for his name's sake.*

*4 Even though I walk
through the darkest valley, [a]*

I will fear no evil,

for you are with me;

your rod and your staff,

they comfort me.

5 You prepare a table before me

in the presence of my enemies.

You anoint my head with oil;

my cup overflows.

6 Surely your goodness and love will follow me

all the days of my life,

and I will dwell in the house of the Lord

forever.

Psalm 23 is a well-known and beloved psalm that provides comfort and assurance of God's faithful care and guidance. It portrays God as our shepherd, tending to our needs, leading us beside still waters, and providing comfort in times of darkness. As we are journeying through this Advent season, this psalm resonates with the anticipation of the coming of Christ, our Good Shepherd.

Our church and local community came together to support a family who had lost everything in a devastating house fire. The family, left homeless and with little possessions, faced uncertainty and despair. However, we rallied around them, providing shelter, clothing, and essential items. This compassionate response embodied the shepherd-like care that can be found amidst challenging times.

Just as the community extended care and support to the affected family, Psalm 23 assures us that the Lord is our shepherd, and we lack nothing. The psalmist's words remind us that God provides for our needs, guiding us to places of peace and rest. Like green pastures and quiet waters, He refreshes our souls, leading us along the right paths for His name's sake.

Furthermore, the psalm acknowledges that life is not exempt from challenges. It acknowledges the reality of walking through the darkest valley, where fear and evil may seem overwhelming. However, the psalmist finds comfort in the presence of the Lord, who wields a rod and staff to protect and guide. In times of uncertainty and darkness, we, too, can find solace in the knowledge that God is with us, bringing comfort and peace.

In Psalm 23:5, we encounter the imagery of a table prepared before us in the presence of our enemies. This powerful image signifies God's provision and protection even in the face of adversity. Just as the community extended support to the family in the news story, God's goodness and love overflow,

ensuring that we are not alone in our struggles. He anoints our heads with oil, symbolizing His blessing and favor upon us.

The psalm concludes with an affirmation of God's enduring goodness and love, assuring us that they will follow us all the days of our lives. This promise is not limited to a specific season or circumstance but spans our entire journey. The psalmist expresses the assurance of dwelling in the house of the Lord forever, emphasizing the eternal nature of God's presence and care.

As we reflect on the words of Psalm 23 during Advent, may we find comfort in the assurance of the Lord's shepherding care. Just as the news story highlighted the power of a community's support, let us remember that we are part of God's community, the body of Christ, called to extend compassion and care to one another. As we await the coming of our Good Shepherd, may we actively participate in His work of restoration, love, and provision in the world around us.

In this season of Advent, may the comforting words of Psalm 23 remind us of the tender care of our Shepherd. May we find solace in His presence, even in the darkest valleys, and trust in His guidance along the right paths. Let us extend His love and compassion to those in need, knowing that we are instruments of His shepherding care.

DECEMBER 15

THE KING OF GLORY:

PSALM 24:1-10



*1 The earth is the Lord's, and everything in it,
the world, and all who live in it;
2 for he founded it on the seas
and established it on the waters.*

*3 Who may ascend the mountain of the Lord?
Who may stand in his holy place?
4 The one who has clean hands and a pure heart,
who does not trust in an idol
or swear by a false god.[a]*

*5 They will receive blessing from the Lord
and vindication from God their Savior.
6 Such is the generation of those who seek him,
who seek your face, God of Jacob.[b][c]*

*7 Lift up your heads, you gates;
be lifted up, you ancient doors,
that the King of glory may come in.*

*8 Who is this King of glory?
The Lord strong and mighty,
the Lord mighty in battle.*

*9 Lift up your heads, you gates;
lift them up, you ancient doors,
that the King of glory may come in.*

*10 Who is he, this King of glory?
The Lord Almighty—
he is the King of glory.*

Psalm 24 is a majestic psalm that proclaims the kingship and glory of God. It invites us to recognize and honor the Lord as the King of glory, the one who deserves our utmost reverence and worship. As we enter the Advent season, this psalm reminds us of the anticipation and joyous expectation of the coming of Christ, our King.

In the realm of modern Christian music, there is a song titled "King of Glory" by Chris Tomlin that beautifully captures the essence of Psalm 24. The lyrics proclaim, "Lift up your gaze, be lifted up; Tell everyone how great the love; The love come down from heaven's gate to kiss the earth with hope and grace." These words reflect the awe and wonder of God's glory and the significance of Jesus' coming to earth.

Psalm 24 begins by acknowledging God's ownership and sovereignty over all creation. The earth and everything in it belong to the Lord, and He established it by His mighty power. This recognition leads us to approach God with reverence and humility, understanding that He is the rightful King over our lives and the entire world.

Verse 3 poses a profound question: Who may ascend the mountain of the Lord? Who may stand in His holy place? The psalmist answers by describing those who have clean hands and a pure heart, who do not trust in idols or false gods. This speaks of the importance of righteousness and wholehearted devotion to God. Through faith in Jesus Christ, who is our righteousness, we are granted access to the presence of the King of glory.

As the psalm progresses, it calls the gates and ancient doors to be lifted up, welcoming the King of glory. This imagery captures the anticipation and

excitement of Christ's coming. In the context of Advent, we lift up our hearts and open the doors of our lives, inviting Jesus to reign and rule over every aspect.

The chorus of the modern Christian song "King of Glory" reminds us to lift up our gaze and tell everyone of God's great love that came down from heaven's gate to bring hope and grace. Advent is a time of proclamation and sharing the good news of Jesus' birth. As we anticipate and celebrate His coming, may our hearts be filled with awe and gratitude for the love that was displayed through His incarnation.

In conclusion, Psalm 24 invites us to acknowledge God as the King of glory and to prepare our hearts to receive Him. The modern Christian song echoes this sentiment, emphasizing the great love that came down to earth through Jesus. As we journey through Advent, may we lift up our gaze, tell of His love, and prepare room in our hearts for the King of glory to enter. Let us honor Him as our rightful King and Savior, embracing the hope and grace that His coming brings.

DECEMBER 16

FROM CAPTIVITY TO REDEMPTION:

PSALM 126:1-6



*1 When the Lord restored the fortunes of[a] Zion,
we were like those who dreamed.*

*2 Our mouths were filled with laughter,
our tongues with songs of joy.*

*Then it was said among the nations,
“The Lord has done great things for them.”*

*3 The Lord has done great things for us,
and we are filled with joy.*

*4 Restore our fortunes, Lord,
like streams in the Negev.*

*5 Those who sow with tears
will reap with songs of joy.*

*6 Those who go out weeping,
carrying seed to sow,
will return with songs of joy,
carrying sheaves with them.*

Psalm 126 recounts the journey from captivity to redemption, a path marked by weeping, sowing with tears, and ultimately reaping with joy. The psalmist reflects on the restoration of Zion and the immense joy experienced by God's people. As we enter the Advent season, this psalm resonates with the anticipation of Christ's coming, reminding us of the hope and joy that accompany our redemption.

In "The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe," there is a poignant quote spoken by Aslan, the lion and central figure of the story. Aslan declares, "Come, children. I have something to show you." This quote captures the sense of anticipation and wonder as the children are invited into a grand adventure, leading to their ultimate redemption and the defeat of the evil witch. Similarly, Psalm 126 invites us into a journey of redemption, restoration, and joy in the presence of our loving God.

The psalmist begins with a vivid description of the Lord restoring the fortunes of Zion, a moment that felt like a dream come true. Laughter and songs of joy fill their mouths, and the surrounding nations bear witness to the great things God has done for His people. Advent is a season of anticipation, where we eagerly await the coming of Christ, our Redeemer, who brings restoration and joy to our lives.

Verse 4 is a plea for continued restoration, asking the Lord to restore their fortunes like the streams in the Negev, a desert region. It symbolizes the transformation of barrenness into abundance. As we journey through Advent, we can join in this prayer, seeking God's ongoing work of restoration and provision in our lives.

Verses 5 and 6 present a beautiful contrast between sowing with tears and reaping with songs of joy. They remind us that our journey of faith may involve seasons of sorrow and hardship. However, just as seeds sown in tears yield a harvest of joy, our faithfulness in the midst of trials will ultimately be rewarded. Advent invites us to trust in God's timing and purposes, knowing that He is faithful to turn our weeping into songs of joy.

As we reflect on Psalm 126 during Advent, we are reminded of the hope found in Christ's coming. Just as the people of Zion experienced the joy of

restoration, we can experience the same joy and redemption through Jesus. His birth, life, death, and resurrection offer us the ultimate path from captivity to freedom. In Him, we find abundant life and eternal hope.

This Advent season, let us embrace the journey of redemption portrayed in Psalm 126. May we approach it with childlike wonder and anticipation, just as the children in Narnia were invited into something greater. As we sow seeds of faith, even amidst tears and challenges, let us trust in God's faithfulness to bring forth a harvest of joy. May the quote from "The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe" remind us of the adventure and redemption that await us in Christ, our Savior.

DECEMBER 17

THE LORD IS MY LIGHT:

PSALM 27



*1 The Lord is my light and my salvation—
whom shall I fear?*

*The Lord is the stronghold of my life—
of whom shall I be afraid?*

*2 When the wicked advance against me
to devour[a] me,
it is my enemies and my foes
who will stumble and fall.*

*3 Though an army besiege me,
my heart will not fear;
though war break out against me,
even then I will be confident.*

*4 One thing I ask from the Lord,
this only do I seek:
that I may dwell in the house of the Lord
all the days of my life,
to gaze on the beauty of the Lord
and to seek him in his temple.*

*5 For in the day of trouble
he will keep me safe in his dwelling;
he will hide me in the shelter of his sacred tent
and set me high upon a rock.*

*6 Then my head will be exalted
above the enemies who surround me;
at his sacred tent I will sacrifice with shouts of joy;
I will sing and make music to the Lord.*

*7 Hear my voice when I call, Lord;
be merciful to me and answer me.*

*8 My heart says of you, "Seek his face!"
Your face, Lord, I will seek.*

*9 Do not hide your face from me,
do not turn your servant away in anger;
you have been my helper.*

*Do not reject me or forsake me,
God my Savior.*

*10 Though my father and mother forsake me,
the Lord will receive me.*

*11 Teach me your way, Lord;
lead me in a straight path
because of my oppressors.*

*12 Do not turn me over to the desire of my foes,
for false witnesses rise up against me,
spouting malicious accusations.*

*13 I remain confident of this:
I will see the goodness of the Lord
in the land of the living.*

*14 Wait for the Lord;
be strong and take heart
and wait for the Lord.*

Psalm 27 beautifully expresses the psalmist's unwavering trust in the Lord amidst challenging circumstances. It reveals a deep confidence in God's protection, guidance, and presence. As we journey through the Advent

season, this psalm resonates with the anticipation of Christ's coming and reminds us of the hope and strength we find in Him.

In many African communities, there is a beloved hymn titled "Thuma Mina," meaning "Send Me." This hymn emphasizes the willingness to be sent by God to bring light, hope, and peace to the world. It aligns with the psalmist's declaration in Psalm 27:1, "The Lord is my light and my salvation—whom shall I fear?"

Psalm 27 begins with a powerful affirmation of the Lord's protection and stronghold in our lives. It proclaims that with God as our light and salvation, there is no need to fear. Even when enemies advance against us or troubles surround us, we can remain confident and unafraid. Advent reminds us of the birth of Jesus, the Light of the World, who dispels darkness and brings salvation.

Verse 4 reveals the psalmist's heart's desire—to dwell in the presence of the Lord, gazing upon His beauty and seeking Him in His temple. This longing for communion with God reflects our own yearning for a deeper connection with Him. As we prepare for Christ's coming during Advent, let us prioritize seeking His face, dwelling in His presence, and growing in intimacy with Him.

Throughout the psalm, the psalmist cries out to the Lord, seeking His mercy, guidance, and protection. It is a reminder that we can bring our prayers and petitions to God, knowing that He hears and answers. The African hymn "Thuma Mina" embodies this spirit of prayerful surrender and willingness to be sent by God, acknowledging our dependence on His guidance and provision.

Verse 13 declares the psalmist's confidence in seeing the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living. It is a statement of unwavering trust, knowing that God's faithfulness and goodness will be evident in our lives, even amidst trials. Advent invites us to wait expectantly for the fulfillment of God's promises, confident that His goodness will prevail.

As we reflect on Psalm 27 during Advent, may we find assurance in the Lord's light and salvation. Let us respond to His call, just as the African hymn encourages us, to be sent into the world as agents of His love, peace, and justice. May we seek His face, bring our prayers to Him, and trust in His unfailing goodness. In this season of anticipation, let us wait for the Lord with strength and take heart, for He is faithful and will fulfill His promises in our lives.

DECEMBER 18

FIRMLY ESTABLISHED IN GOD'S PRESENCE:

PSALM 125:1-5



*1 Those who trust in the Lord are like Mount Zion,
which cannot be shaken but endures forever.*

*2 As the mountains surround Jerusalem,
so the Lord surrounds his people
both now and forevermore.*

*3 The scepter of the wicked will not remain
over the land allotted to the righteous,
for then the righteous might use
their hands to do evil.*

*4 Lord, do good to those who are good,
to those who are upright in heart.*

*5 But those who turn to crooked ways
the Lord will banish with the evildoers.*

Peace be on Israel.

Psalm 125 presents a beautiful image of the security and stability that comes from trusting in the Lord. It compares the steadfastness of those who rely on God to Mount Zion, which cannot be shaken. As we enter the Advent season, this psalm reminds us of the assurance and peace we find in Christ, our unshakable foundation. .

John Wesley (the founder of Methodism) once said, "Do all the good you can, by all the means you can, in all the ways you can, in all the places you can, at all the times you can, to all the people you can, as long as ever you can." This quote reflects the heart of someone who deeply understood the importance of living out our faith through acts of love and kindness. It aligns with the psalmist's plea for God to do good to those who are upright in heart.

Psalm 125 begins by affirming the unshakable nature of those who trust in the Lord. Just as Mount Zion stands firm, the people of God, grounded in their trust, endure forever. Advent reminds us of the birth of Jesus, who came to establish an unshakable foundation for our lives, offering salvation and eternal hope. As we trust in Him, we are rooted in His unchanging love and faithfulness.

Verse 2 draws a parallel between the mountains that surround Jerusalem and the Lord who surrounds His people. It symbolizes divine protection, reminding us that God's presence envelops us both now and forevermore. In the context of Advent, we recognize that Christ's coming brought God's presence near, dwelling among us and offering us the assurance of His abiding love and protection.

The psalmist's plea in verse 4 reflects the desire for God's goodness to be poured out upon those who are good and upright in heart. It echoes John Wesley's call to do all the good we can. Advent invites us to actively live out our faith, extending love, kindness, and compassion to others, knowing that God's goodness is not limited but overflows through us.

Verse 5 presents a contrast between those who turn to crooked ways and the righteous. The Lord promises to banish evildoers and bring peace to His people. It highlights the importance of walking in righteousness and turning

away from the paths of wickedness. As we reflect on Advent, let us examine our hearts and strive to align our actions with the righteousness and peace that Christ brings.

In conclusion, Psalm 125 reminds us of the security and stability that comes from trusting in the Lord. It calls us to actively live out our faith, doing good and pursuing righteousness. The quote by John Wesley reinforces the importance of living a life of love and kindness. As we enter the Advent season, may we find strength and assurance in Christ, our unshakable foundation. May we actively seek to do good, knowing that God's presence surrounds us and empowers us to be agents of His peace and love in the world.

DECEMBER 19

FINDING COURAGE IN GOD'S LIGHT:

PSALM 27:1-3



Of David.

*1 The Lord is my light and my salvation—
whom shall I fear?*

*The Lord is the stronghold of my life—
of whom shall I be afraid?*

*2 When the wicked advance against me
to devour[a] me,
it is my enemies and my foes
who will stumble and fall.*

*3 Though an army besiege me,
my heart will not fear;
though war break out against me,
even then I will be confident.*

Psalm 27 radiates with the theme of finding courage and hope in God's light, even in the face of adversity. It reassures us that with the Lord as our light and salvation, there is no need to fear. As we embark on the Advent season, this psalm echoes the anticipation of Christ's coming and reminds us of the unwavering confidence we can have in Him.

In the enchanting children's book "The Little Engine That Could" by Watty Piper, we find a quote that resonates with the spirit of Psalm 27. The quote

says, "I think I can, I think I can." This simple yet powerful phrase encapsulates the determination and courage to press on, even in challenging circumstances. It aligns with the psalmist's declaration of confidence in God's strength and deliverance.

Psalm 27 begins with an affirmation of the Lord's light and salvation. Just as the Little Engine believed it could overcome obstacles, we can have the same unwavering confidence in God's power to overcome any adversity. Advent reminds us that Jesus, the Light of the World, entered into our brokenness to bring salvation and hope. In Him, we find the strength to face our fears and walk in His victorious light. In God's strength and light, "I think I can, I think I can."

Verse 3 expresses the psalmist's assurance that even when enemies surround and threaten, their heart will not fear. This resolute confidence arises from trusting in the Lord's protection and strength. It echoes the Little Engine's determination to overcome challenges, fueled by a belief in its own abilities. Similarly, we can face challenges with unwavering confidence, knowing that God is with us.

The psalmist's desire to dwell in the beauty of the Lord and seek Him in His temple (verse 4) echoes our own longing for intimate communion with God. Advent invites us to draw near to God, seeking His presence and immersing ourselves in His Word. Just as the Little Engine believed in its capabilities, we can grow in our faith and find comfort in God's presence.

As we navigate the Advent season, we may encounter uncertainties, difficulties, and fears. However, like the Little Engine and the psalmist, we are called to face these challenges with confidence and trust in God's light and salvation. By embracing the mindset of "I think I can," we tap into the divine strength and courage that God provides.

In conclusion, Psalm 27 teaches us the power of finding courage and hope in God's light. Just as the Little Engine believed in its abilities, we can trust in God's strength and deliverance. As we journey through Advent, let us embrace the spirit of unwavering confidence in God's presence. May God move in us so that we can say, "I think I can" with faith and courage, knowing that God's light will guide us through every challenge we face.

DECEMBER 20

THE UNFAILING COVENANT:

PSALM 89:1-4, 19-29



*1 I will sing of the Lord's great love forever;
with my mouth I will make your faithfulness known
through all generations.*

*2 I will declare that your love stands firm forever,
that you have established your faithfulness in heaven itself.*
*3 You said, "I have made a covenant with my chosen one,
I have sworn to David my servant,
4 'I will establish your line forever
and make your throne firm through all generations.'"*

*19 Once you spoke in a vision,
to your faithful people you said:
"I have bestowed strength on a warrior;
I have raised up a young man from among the people.*

*20 I have found David my servant;
with my sacred oil I have anointed him.*

*21 My hand will sustain him;
surely my arm will strengthen him.*

*22 The enemy will not get the better of him;
the wicked will not oppress him.*

*23 I will crush his foes before him
and strike down his adversaries.*

24 My faithful love will be with him,

and through my name his horn[a] will be exalted.

*25 I will set his hand over the sea,
his right hand over the rivers.*

*26 He will call out to me, 'You are my Father,
my God, the Rock my Savior.'*

*27 And I will appoint him to be my firstborn,
the most exalted of the kings of the earth.*

*28 I will maintain my love to him forever,
and my covenant with him will never fail.*

*29 I will establish his line forever,
his throne as long as the heavens endure.*

Psalm 89 exalts the Lord's enduring love and faithfulness, highlighting His covenant with David and the promise of an everlasting lineage and throne. It testifies to God's unwavering commitment to His chosen people, assuring them of His faithfulness for all generations. As we embark on the Advent season, this psalm echoes the anticipation of Christ's coming and reminds us of the fulfillment of God's promise in Jesus, our eternal King. Let us explore its message and draw inspiration from a hymn that echoes its themes.

In the beloved hymn "Great Is Thy Faithfulness" by Thomas Chisholm, we find a quote that beautifully echoes the sentiments of Psalm 89. The quote says, "Morning by morning new mercies I see; All I have needed Thy hand hath provided; Great is Thy faithfulness, Lord, unto me!" This line acknowledges God's unwavering faithfulness and provision, capturing the essence of Psalm 89's proclamation of God's enduring love.

Psalm 89 opens with a declaration of the Lord's great love and faithfulness, which stands firm forever. It affirms the covenant God made with David, promising to establish his lineage and throne throughout all generations. Advent reminds us that Jesus, the long-awaited Messiah, is the fulfillment of

this covenant. In Him, we witness the unending love and faithfulness of God, revealed to us in a new and profound way.

Verses 19 to 29 specifically speak of God's anointing and promises to David, ensuring his strength, protection, and victory over his adversaries. It foreshadows the reign of Jesus, the anointed One, who brings salvation and establishes His eternal kingdom. Through Jesus, God's faithful love is forever maintained, and His covenant never fails.

The hymn quote beautifully aligns with the psalmist's proclamation of God's faithfulness, highlighting the daily experience of new mercies and provision. It echoes the psalmist's confidence in God's sustaining hand upon His chosen servant, David, and by extension, upon all who trust in Him. It affirms that God's faithfulness endures, morning by morning, and He faithfully provides all that we need.

As we celebrate the fulfillment of God's promise in Jesus, our Savior and King. Like the psalmist and the hymn writer, we can declare God's faithfulness and provision in our lives. Each day, we have the privilege to witness new mercies and experience His unwavering love. Advent invites us to reflect on the great faithfulness of our God and to respond with gratitude and praise.

In conclusion, Psalm 89 reminds us of the unbreakable covenant between God and His people. Advent invites us to embrace the fulfillment of this promise in Jesus, who embodies God's faithfulness. Let us echo the hymn's affirmation of God's daily provision and unwavering love. As we anticipate the celebration of Christ's birth, may our hearts overflow with gratitude for God's great faithfulness and His eternal covenant, fulfilled in Jesus, our Lord.

DECEMBER 21

A JOURNEY OF HOPE AND TRUST:

PSALM 31:1-5, 15-16



Of David.

- 1 In you, Lord, I have taken refuge;
let me never be put to shame;
deliver me in your righteousness.*
- 2 Turn your ear to me,
come quickly to my rescue;
be my rock of refuge,
a strong fortress to save me.*
- 3 Since you are my rock and my fortress,
for the sake of your name lead and guide me.*
- 4 Keep me free from the trap that is set for me,
for you are my refuge.*
- 5 Into your hands I commit my spirit;
deliver me, Lord, my faithful God.*
- 15 My times are in your hands;
deliver me from the hands of my enemies,
from those who pursue me.*
- 16 Let your face shine on your servant;
save me in your unfailing love."*

Psalm 31 beautifully expresses the psalmist's cry for refuge and deliverance in times of trouble. It reveals the depth of trust and hope placed in the Lord as the ultimate source of protection and salvation. As we embark

on the Advent season, this psalm resonates with the journey of hope and trust we undertake as we anticipate the coming of Christ.

In "The Lord of the Rings," by J.R.R Tolkien, there is a powerful quote by Samwise Gamgee: "There's some good in this world, Mr. Frodo... and it's worth fighting for." This quote captures the essence of hope and determination amidst challenging circumstances. It aligns with the psalmist's plea for deliverance and the trust placed in the Lord's unfailing love.

Psalm 31 begins with a plea for refuge, emphasizing the psalmist's trust in the Lord's righteousness and the desire to never be put to shame. Advent reminds us of the hope we find in Christ, who offers us refuge and salvation. In Him, we have a rock of refuge, a fortress of strength to turn to in times of trouble.

Verse 5 contains a powerful declaration of surrender and trust: "Into your hands I commit my spirit." These words echo the words of Jesus on the cross, demonstrating complete reliance on God's faithfulness. In Advent, we reflect on Christ's surrender to God's plan for our salvation, inspiring us to entrust our lives into His loving hands.

The psalmist acknowledges that their times are in God's hands, seeking deliverance from enemies and longing for the Lord's shining face and unfailing love to save them. This resonates with the Advent journey as we entrust our times and circumstances to God, seeking His deliverance and desiring His presence to shine upon us.

The quote from "The Lord of the Rings" reminds us that amidst the struggles and challenges we face, there is still goodness worth fighting for. Advent calls us to hold onto the hope found in Christ, who brings light into the darkness and fights on our behalf. Just as Samwise Gamgee encourages

Frodo, we are encouraged to persevere in faith, knowing that there is good to be discovered and fought for in this world.

As we journey through Advent, let us find solace and strength in Psalm 31. May we echo the psalmist's plea for refuge and deliverance, trusting in the Lord's righteousness and surrendering our lives into His faithful hands. May the quote from "The Lord of the Rings" inspire us to persevere and recognize the goodness worth fighting for. In this season of anticipation, let us hold onto hope and trust in the unfailing love of our Savior, Jesus Christ.

DECEMBER 22

DIVINE KNOWLEDGE AND THE JOY OF INCARNATION:

PSALM 31:1-5, 15-16



*1 You have searched me, Lord,
and you know me.*

*you perceive my thoughts from afar.
you are familiar with all my ways.*

*4 Before a word is on my tongue
you, Lord, know it completely.*

*5 You hem me in behind and before,
and you lay your hand upon me.*

*6 Such knowledge is too wonderful for me,
too lofty for me to attain.*

7 Where can I go from your Spirit?

Where can I flee from your presence?

*10 even there your hand will guide me,
your right hand will hold me fast.*

*and the light become night around me,
the night will shine like the day,
for darkness is as light to you.*

*13 For you created my inmost being;
you knit me together in my mother's womb.*

14 I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made;

*your works are wonderful,
I know that full well.*

*15 My frame was not hidden from you
when I was made in the secret place,*

*16 Your eyes saw my unformed body;
all the days ordained for me were written in your book
before one of them came to be.*

*17 How precious to me are your thoughts, God!
How vast is the sum of them!*

*18 Were I to count them,
they would outnumber the grains of sand—
when I awake, I am still with you.*

Psalm 139 beautifully expresses the depth of God's knowledge and presence in our lives. It reveals His intimate understanding of our thoughts, actions, and very being. As we embark on the Advent journey, this psalm resonates with the wonder of the Incarnation, the joyous moment when God's presence became tangible in the form of Jesus Christ.

In the hymn "Hark! The Herald Angels Sing" by Charles Wesley, we find a line that echoes the sentiments of Psalm 139: "Veiled in flesh, the Godhead see; hail th' incarnate Deity!" This line encapsulates the awe-inspiring truth of the Incarnation, as God, in His infinite knowledge and love, took on human form to dwell among us.

Psalm 139 begins with the acknowledgment that God has searched and known us intimately. He perceives our thoughts, knows our ways, and is present even before a word is on our tongue. Advent invites us to reflect on the profound truth that God intimately knows us and, in His perfect knowledge, extends His love and grace toward us.

Verse 7 poses the rhetorical question, "Where can I go from your Spirit? Where can I flee from your presence?" The psalmist recognizes the omnipresence of God, His abiding presence that guides and holds us fast. In Advent, we celebrate the joy of God's presence with us, not only as an abstract idea but as the tangible reality of Jesus Christ, who came to be Immanuel, "God with us."

The psalmist reflects on the wonder of being fearfully and wonderfully made. God intricately created our inmost being, knitting us together in our mother's womb. Advent magnifies this truth as we celebrate the miracle of the Incarnation, the divine becoming human. In Jesus, God stepped into our world, taking on our human frame, and revealing His boundless love for us.

The psalmist's declaration of God's precious thoughts and the vastness of His understanding further emphasizes the magnitude of God's knowledge and love for us. His thoughts toward us outnumber the grains of sand, reflecting His immeasurable care and attention. In Advent, we rejoice in the fulfillment of God's thoughts and plans for our salvation through Jesus Christ.

As we reflect on Psalm 139 during Advent, let us embrace the profound truth that God knows us intimately and loves us deeply. May we find joy in the reality of the Incarnation, where God's presence was veiled in flesh. Let the hymn "Hark! The Herald Angels Sing" resound in our hearts, reminding us of the wonder of God becoming man for our redemption. As we journey through Advent, may we be filled with gratitude and praise for the divine knowledge and love that guides us, and may we proclaim with joy, "Hail th' incarnate Deity!"

DECEMBER 23

DIVINE KNOWLEDGE AND THE JOY OF INCARNATION:

PSALM 1



*1 Blessed is the one
who does not walk in step with the wicked
or stand in the way that sinners take
or sit in the company of mockers,
2 but whose delight is in the law of the Lord,
and who meditates on his law day and night.
3 That person is like a tree planted by streams of water,
which yields its fruit in season
and whose leaf does not wither—
whatever they do prospers.*

*4 Not so the wicked!
They are like chaff
that the wind blows away.*

*5 Therefore the wicked will not stand in the judgment,
nor sinners in the assembly of the righteous.*

*6 For the Lord watches over the way of the righteous,
but the way of the wicked leads to destruction.*

As we draw near to the celebration of Christ's birth, Psalm 1 offers a profound reflection on the path to true happiness and spiritual fulfillment.

This psalm reminds us that our joy and prosperity are intimately tied to our relationship with God and our alignment with His ways.

Consider the imagery of a tree planted by streams of water. It flourishes because its roots have a constant source of nourishment. Likewise, when we delight in the law of the Lord and meditate on His Word day and night, our souls are like those well-nourished roots. We find our strength, stability, and spiritual sustenance in God's presence.

During this Advent season, it's easy to get caught up in the busyness and distractions that surround us. However, the call of Psalm 1 is to prioritize our relationship with God above all else. By seeking Him, delighting in His Word, and meditating on His promises, we prepare our hearts to receive the greatest gift of all, the birth of our Savior, Jesus Christ.

St. Teresa of Avila, a renowned mystic and theologian, once said, "All the way to heaven is heaven, because Jesus said, 'I am the way.'" As we journey through Advent and approach the celebration of Christ's birth, let us remember that the path to true joy is found in Christ Himself. He is the way, the truth, and the life, and by following Him, we find our hearts and souls truly blessed.

In the midst of the Advent season, take a moment to reflect on your priorities. Are you delighting in the Word of the Lord and finding your nourishment in His presence? As you do so, may you discover the true happiness and prosperity that come from walking in God's ways.

DECEMBER 24

THE GRAND FINALE OF PRAISE:

PSALM 150



1 Praise the Lord. [a]

*Praise God in his sanctuary;
praise him in his mighty heavens.*

*2 Praise him for his acts of power;
praise him for his surpassing greatness.*

*3 Praise him with the sounding of the trumpet,
praise him with the harp and lyre,*

*4 praise him with timbrel and dancing,
praise him with the strings and pipe,*

*5 praise him with the clash of cymbals,
praise him with resounding cymbals.*

6 Let everything that has breath praise the Lord.

Praise the Lord.

As we gather on this Christmas Eve, our hearts are filled with anticipation and joy. We have journeyed through the Advent season, reflecting on the promises of God and the fulfillment found in the birth of Jesus Christ. Now, we turn to Psalm 150, a hymn of exuberant praise, as we celebrate the grand finale of our Advent journey.

In "O Holy Night," written by Adolphe Adam, we find a profound and heartfelt expression of the beauty and significance of Christ's birth. The line "O night divine, O night when Christ was born" echoes the sentiment of the psalmist's call to praise the Lord for His acts of power and surpassing greatness. It invites us to reflect on the sacredness of this night and the magnitude of God's love manifested in the incarnation.

Psalm 150 begins by summoning us to praise God in His sanctuary and in the heavens. As we gather in our places of worship, or even in our homes, we join with believers around the world to lift our voices in adoration and gratitude. On this special Christmas Eve, we stand in awe of God's power displayed through the birth of Jesus, our Savior.

The psalmist urges us to praise God with various instruments, creating a symphony of worship. Trumpets, harps, lyres, timbrels, strings, and cymbals all contribute to the resounding praise. These diverse instruments symbolize the richness and diversity of our own worship expressions. On this holy night, we bring our hearts, voices, and instruments of praise, creating a beautiful melody that ascends to the heavens.

Verse 6 resounds with a universal call to praise: "Let everything that has breath praise the Lord. Praise the Lord." It is a reminder that all creation is invited to join in the celebration of Christ's birth. The miracle of Christmas is not limited to a specific time or place; it encompasses the entire world. On this night, we join with all believers, past and present, in proclaiming the goodness and glory of our God.

As we conclude our Advent journey and on this Christmas Eve, may our hearts be filled with overflowing praise. Let the words of "O Holy Night" resound in our souls, reminding us of the divine significance of this night.

Let us praise the Lord for His acts of power and His surpassing greatness. Together, as one voice, may we join the heavenly chorus, proclaiming the birth of our Savior, Jesus Christ. As we lift our voices and instruments, may our worship be a sweet offering of gratitude and adoration. May this Christmas Eve be a moment of profound encounter with the divine as we celebrate the birth of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.



DECEMBER 25

THE JOYFUL SONG OF REDEMPTION:

PSALM 98:1-9



*1 Sing to the Lord a new song,
for he has done marvelous things;
his right hand and his holy arm
have worked salvation for him.*

*2 The Lord has made his salvation known
and revealed his righteousness to the nations.*

*3 He has remembered his love
and his faithfulness to Israel;
all the ends of the earth have seen
the salvation of our God.*

*4 Shout for joy to the Lord, all the earth,
burst into jubilant song with music;*

*5 make music to the Lord with the harp,
with the harp and the sound of singing,*

*6 with trumpets and the blast of the ram's horn—
shout for joy before the Lord, the King.*

*7 Let the sea resound, and everything in it,
the world, and all who live in it.*

*8 Let the rivers clap their hands,
let the mountains sing together for joy;*

*9 let them sing before the Lord,
for he comes to judge the earth.
He will judge the world in righteousness
and the peoples with equity.*

Psalm 98 calls us to sing a new song of praise to the Lord for the marvelous things He has done. It invites us to join in joyful songs of redemption, celebrating the salvation that God has made known to the world. As we gather to celebrate Christmas, we are reminded of the ultimate act of God's salvation through the birth of Jesus Christ.

A short story called, "The Tale of the Three Trees" shares a heartwarming tale. It beautifully illustrates the providential purpose God has for our lives. In this story, three trees dream of the great things they want to become. The first tree dreams of becoming a treasure chest filled with precious jewels, the second tree longs to be a mighty ship that carries kings across the seas, and the third tree desires to grow tall and point to heaven like a majestic tree in a temple.

In the unfolding of the story, each tree's dream seems to take an unexpected turn. The first tree becomes a manger, holding the newborn King, Jesus Christ. The second tree becomes a simple fishing boat, carrying Jesus and His disciples across the waters. The third tree becomes the rugged cross upon which Jesus willingly sacrifices Himself for the redemption of humanity.

Psalm 98 calls for shouts of joy, bursts of jubilant song, and resounding music in praise of the Lord. It portrays a grand symphony of creation joining together to celebrate God's salvation. The sea, rivers, and mountains are depicted as participants in this joyful chorus. Just as the trees in the story

found their purpose in the birth, ministry, and sacrifice of Jesus, we too find our purpose in joining the celestial symphony of praise.

The psalmist invites us to recognize and remember God's love and faithfulness to Israel, which extends to all the ends of the earth. The birth of Jesus brought salvation not only to Israel but to all nations. It is a cause for uncontainable joy and exuberant praise. Like the trees in the story, we may have had different dreams or expectations for our lives, but God's plan of salvation brings ultimate fulfillment and purpose.

As we celebrate Christmas, let us respond to the call of Psalm 98 by lifting our voices in praise. Let us join the chorus of creation, offering shouts of joy and resounding music to our King. May the story of "The Tale of the Three Trees" remind us of God's providential plan and how the birth of Jesus fulfilled the deepest longings of our hearts. In Christ, our Savior and Redeemer, we find joy, hope, and salvation.

May this Christmas be a time of renewed gratitude and awe as we celebrate the marvelous things God has done. Let us sing a new song, bursting with jubilant praise, for the salvation that God has made known through Jesus Christ. May we recognize God's purpose for our lives and find joy in knowing that our dreams align with His perfect plan.

A NOTE ABOUT THE AUTHOR

"I love God, love my family, and love people. God is in us and God is for us. May God move in us and may God move for us to love others the way God loves us."

I don't know what to say about my life that is profound. I grew up with one foot in the country and one foot in the city. I always knew God's love. I have always known the love of my parents. I am thankful for the gifts of my wife and children.

I am a pastor, but I am flawed. I am a sinner and saved by grace. I wish all to know the joy of salvation. There is nothing like it.

I began my pastoral journey studying networking and computer science. Who would have thought that our world would change so much in 2001! During the aftermath of 9/11, I found myself asking, "How can I help?" The answer became clearer as God laid it on my heart to share His great love with others.

I found myself at Mount Olive College 81 (University of Mount Olive) and then on to Duke Divinity School where I obtained a Master of Divinity. In my educational journey I learned through the challenging classes that also challenged my own understanding of faith. I learned why I believed what I believe by learning how to defend the orthodox biblical faith.

In this journey, I never forgot that I have always been simple (one foot in the country and one foot in the city). The KISS method works best for me. For anyone that does not know what the KISS method is...keep it super simple.

So, simply put, my faith always brought me back to God's Living Word. When my faith is challenged, I turn to the Bible. The Bible is how God carried me through all of life's journey. I pray that this book gives you a desire to read more of God's Word.

Thank you for reading and I hope it was a blessing.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Joseph Franklin III". The signature is written in a cursive style with a horizontal line underneath the name.