# Advent Reflection Part 3

**December 15th – 25th December (Days 15-25)**

### Written by Rev Mark James, inspired by Henri J M Nouwen

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**Day 15: The Arrival of the Divine**

Here we are again, in the time of Advent. Father David offered many meaningful sermons but this one stuck in my mind. ‘Keep your eyes open, always be prepared, so you can spot the Divine in your loved ones - your partner, your parents, your kids, your friends, and even your teachers. But don't confine this awareness to just the people around you; widen it to encompass everything you encounter in your daily life, including the news. The Divine is always showing up, continuously unveiling itself. So, stay alert to this ongoing arrival’. By being mindful - listening carefully and observing closely - you can detect the Divine at any moment. Life itself is like Advent; it's a never-ending journey of acknowledging the Divine's constant coming. When we consider Mark 13:32-36, it underlines the importance of staying constantly alert. The verses tell us we don't know when the time will come. It might be in the evening, at midnight when the rooster crows, or at daybreak. So, we mustn't sleep, but remain awake, just like the house servants who must stay alert for their master's unexpected return. This idea fits perfectly with the notion of life as a continuous Advent - a ceaseless watch for the Divine's presence in our daily lives.

**Mark 13:32-36**

“But about that day or hour no one knows, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father. Be on guard! Be alert[[a](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Mark%2013%3A32-36&version=NIV#fen-NIV-24751a)]! You do not know when that time will come. It’s like a man going away: He leaves his house and puts his servants in charge, each with their assigned task, and tells the one at the door to keep watch. “Therefore, keep watch because you do not know when the owner of the house will come back—whether in the evening, or at midnight, or when the rooster crows, or at dawn. If he comes suddenly, do not let him find you sleeping.

**Prayer**

Dear Divine Presence, as we journey through the season of Advent, we stay ever watchful and alert, recognizing Your presence in every encounter, every moment. Help us remain vigilant as we are reminded in Mark 13:32-36 that we do not know when the hour will come. Illuminate our paths and hearts with Your love, mirrored in our loved ones and everything around us. May we continuously welcome You into our lives, just as we welcome Christ on Christmas. Bless us with the strength to remain in a state of perpetual preparedness, allowing us to recognize Your constant arrival. Amen.

**Action**

By setting aside a few minutes each day to clear your mind and focus on your breath, you can cultivate a greater awareness of the present moment. This heightened awareness can help you better recognise the presence of the Divine in your daily life. Additionally, practicing acts of kindness and compassion can also serve as a means of welcoming the Divine. Remember, recognising the Divine is often found in the simple, everyday moments of life.

**DAY 16 - The Sacred Heart of Compassion**

God's love, infinite and boundless, yearned to be known by us. To fulfil our deepest yearnings, He sent His beloved son, Jesus, whose heart, in its human capacity, could encompass all of humanity's solitude and suffering. Jesus' heart isn't made of stone, but of feeling and compassion. His heart, unencumbered by our earthly sins and betrayals, embodies the vastness and depth of divine love itself. His heart doesn't discriminate between the wealthy or the poor, friends or foes, women, or men, the enslaved or the free, the sinner or the saint. His heart is a sanctuary, welcoming all with unconditional and limitless love. In the words of Matthew 11:28-30, Jesus invites us, "Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light." His call mirrors the inclusivity and compassion of His heart, offering solace and comfort to all.

**Matthew 11:28-30**

“Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light.”

**Prayer**

Dear Heavenly Father, In the midst of our toil and burdens, we are humbled by Your ceaseless invitation to seek solace in Your embrace. In Your boundless compassion reflected in Jesus, we find our sanctuary, an oasis amidst the desert of life's struggles. "Come to me," echoes the voice of our Savior, a call not conditional upon our strength but rather a recognition of our inherent frailty. Help us, Lord, to heed this call, to lay our burdens at the foot of the Cross, and to find rest in the gentle heart of Jesus, who is meek and humble. We are all weary travellers on this journey of life, and yet, in Your infinite love, you offer us a refuge and a respite. We pray for the grace to accept this divine gift, to learn from the humility and gentleness of Your Son, and to find rest for our weary souls in His compassionate heart. In Your sacred presence, may our hearts be filled with the fullness of Your love and power, transforming our weariness into strength and our burdens into blessings. In the name of Jesus, who extends this loving invitation to us all, we pray. Amen.

**Action**

A simple action that reflects the devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus is to practice daily acts of kindness and compassion. Make it a goal to perform at least one act of kindness each day, whether it's helping a neighbour, listening to someone who needs to be heard, or even smiling at a stranger. Let your actions be guided by empathy and love, just as the Sacred Heart symbolizes God's love and mercy. Additionally, consider setting aside some time for prayer, perhaps by incorporating the Litany of the Sacred Heart or the Novena to the Sacred Heart into your daily or weekly routine. This will not only deepen your connection with God, but also remind you of the love and compassion that we are called to embody in our lives.

**DAY 17: Whom Do I Belong To?**

The crux of the matter is this: "Who has my allegiance? Is it God or the world?" While I persist in seeking affirmation through the question, "Do you love me? Are you sure you love me?" I relinquish all authority to the world's voice, placing myself in a state of servitude. The world's love is littered with "ifs," conditionals that bind and restrict. The world declares, "I love you, but only if you are attractive, smart, and affluent. I love you if you are well-educated, have a secure job, and influential connections. I love you if you are productive, if you buy and sell plenty." The world's love is a maze of unending "ifs," a labyrinth from which escape seems impossible due to the overwhelming demands. This conditional love of the world is a constant, an unchanging reality. If I continue to search for my authentic self in this world of conditional love, I will remain tethered to the world, stuck in a cycle of trying, failing, and trying again. Deuteronomy 30:15-18 says, "See, I set before you today life and prosperity, death and destruction. For I command you today to love the LORD your God, to walk in obedience to him, and to keep his commands, decrees and laws; then you will live and increase..." By focusing on God's unconditional love, we can break free from the world's conditional love, leading a life of true freedom and prosperity, not bound by the world's "ifs," but grounded in God's unwavering love.

**Deuteronomy 30:15-18**

See, I set before you today life and prosperity, death and destruction. For I command you today to love the Lord your God, to walk in obedience to him, and to keep his commands, decrees and laws; then you will live and increase, and the Lord your God will bless you in the land you are entering to possess. But if your heart turns away and you are not obedient, and if you are drawn away to bow down to other gods and worship them, I declare to you this day that you will certainly be destroyed. You will not live long in the land you are crossing the Jordan to enter and possess.

**Prayer**

"Gracious and Loving Father, we come before You today with hearts open and minds ready to receive Your divine guidance. As we reflect upon Your word in Deuteronomy 30:15-18, we ask for Your wisdom to help us understand the profound choice between the conditional love of the world and Your everlasting, unconditional love. Lord, we acknowledge that the world's love can be fleeting and conditional, shifting with the winds of change. Yet, your love, God, is steadfast and unchanging, unfailing in the midst of our trials and tribulations. Help us to always remember this, to let it guide our allegiance and our actions. As we journey through this Advent season, may we be mindful of the choices we make, choosing You first and foremost. Let Your love be our compass, guiding us towards actions that honour You and reflect Your grace. As we meditate on these words, we ask for Your Holy Spirit to illuminate our understanding, to deepen our faith, and to strengthen our commitment to You. May we break free from the world's conditional love and fully embrace Your unconditional love, which brings true freedom and everlasting life. In Jesus' name, we pray. Amen."

**Action**

Intentionally practice love as outlined in the first source. This could be done by identifying blind spots in our love for others and actively working towards overcoming these. Writing love letters to family members could serve as a tangible expression of God's unconditional love, helping to bridge any gaps in understanding or feeling this love. Lastly, demonstrating love to those around us, even strangers or those in need, can mirror the love of God that is inclusive, unconditional, and selfless.

**DAY 18 - The Lure of Authority**

In the annals of Christianity, it's paradoxical to witness its leaders often succumbing to the allure of authority - be it political, military, economic, or moral and spiritual - even while professing in the name of Jesus, who willingly let go of his divine authority, humbled himself, and became one among us. The misconception of using authority as a tool to propagate the Gospel is perhaps the most significant of all. Under this pretext, crusades were launched, inquisitions set up, native populations enslaved, and positions of great influence coveted. Each time we witness a significant crisis in the Church's history, a major contributing factor seems to be the misuse of authority by those professing to follow Jesus, who was poor and powerless. What makes the pull of authority so seemingly irresistible? Perhaps it substitutes the challenging task of love with an easier path. It seems simpler to play God than to love God, easier to regulate people than to love them, more straightforward to own life than to truly love it. Drawing on Philippians 2:4-8, let us strive not to seek our own interests excessively, but also consider the interests of others, mirroring Jesus Christ who humbled himself in obedience to God. As followers of Christ, let's prioritise unity, truth, friendship, love, and the well-being of others over our own desires, recognising and valuing the abilities and gifts of others.

**Philippians 2:4-8**

not looking to your own interests but each of you to the interests of the others. In your relationships with one another, have the same mindset as Christ Jesus: Who, being in very nature[[a](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Philippians+2%3A4-8&version=NIV#fen-NIV-29398a)] God, did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage; rather, he made himself nothing by taking the very nature[[b](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Philippians+2%3A4-8&version=NIV#fen-NIV-29399b)] of a servant, being made in human likeness. And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to death— even death on a cross!

**Prayer**

"Gracious and Loving God, as we ponder the words of Philippians 2:4-8, guide our hearts and minds towards humility and selflessness. Help us resist the allure of power and authority that can lead us away from Your divine path. Remind us that our true calling is to love, to serve, and to put others' needs before our own, just as Jesus did. Give us the courage to value the abilities and gifts of others and to prioritize their interests. May we live not for our glory but for Yours. We ask this in the name of Jesus, who humbled Himself for our sake. Amen."

**Action**

An action that can be derived from this reflection and prayer is practicing selflessness and humility in our daily lives. This could be as simple as prioritising the needs and interests of others over our own. For instance, spend time volunteering at a local charity, help a neighbour in need, or simply lend a listening ear to someone who needs it. Remember, the aim is not to seek recognition or rewards but to embrace humility as outlined in Philippians 2:4-8. This action will not only bring us closer to our Christian values but also help create a more loving and empathetic society.

**DAY 19: Making Ready for His Arrival**

Father Pere Thomas communicates in his discourses about the significance of the days leading up to Christmas, which ought to be filled with heartfelt prayer. This time is to prepare our souls to welcome Christ's arrival. Our readiness is crucial; Christ wishes to find a home in us, yet we must be receptive, willing, and genuinely welcoming. The Advent season, particularly the final days before Christmas, helps us become such vessels. This morning, I anticipated a day entirely dedicated to prayer. However, as evening fell, I found myself perplexed about where all the time had vanished. The external factors of Christmas – gifts, decorations, brief visits – seemed to engulf the day, dissipating like water leaking from a poorly constructed pipe! It's challenging to discern between what's pressing and truly significant! Remember, as per 1 Peter 1:22-23, we have purified ourselves by obeying the truth, thereby demonstrating sincere love for each other. We are born again, not of perishable seed, but of imperishable, through the living and enduring word of God. This serves to remind us of the importance of spiritual preparedness and love, rather than focusing on materialistic aspects of the holiday.

**1 Peter 1:22-23**

Now that you have purified yourselves by obeying the truth so that you have sincere love for each other, love one another deeply, from the heart.[[a](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=1+Peter+1%3A22-23&version=NIV#fen-NIV-30397a)] For you have been born again, not of perishable seed, but of imperishable, through the living and enduring word of God.

**Prayer**

"Dear Heavenly Father, we come before you today with hearts open and minds ready to receive your word. As we reflect upon this Advent season, we ask for your divine guidance to help us prepare our hearts for the arrival of our Savior, Jesus Christ.

We acknowledge our earthly distractions and confess that we often get entangled in the material aspects of this season. Help us to focus on the true essence of Christmas, which is the birth of your Son, our Lord, and Savior. As we ponder upon 1 Peter 1:22-23, remind us continuously of the imperishable seed through which we have been born again. Help us to love one another deeply from the heart, just as your word instructs us. Lord, we pray for a renewal of our minds and a transformation of our hearts as we journey through Advent. Let our actions reflect the love you have for us and the love we ought to have for one another. In the precious name of Jesus Christ, we pray. Amen."

**Action**

Each day, take a few moments to meditate on a verse from the Bible. Today, focus on 1 Peter 1:22-23. As you read and reflect, consider how the verse applies to your life and how you can live out its teachings. Write down your thoughts and insights in a journal. At the end of the day, revisit your reflection and commit to one action that will bring these teachings to life in your daily interactions.

**Day 20: Embracing Divine Love**

As we step deeper into this season of Advent, we are invited into a journey of reflection, anticipation, and spiritual growth. These are moments when our hearts are drawn towards the nativity, towards the unique love story told by Jesus Christ. It is a time to remember and to celebrate our own divine origins and cherished status as children of God. In Isaiah 49:1-2, we are reminded of our divine heritage. The passage reads, "Listen to me, O coastlands, and give attention, you peoples from afar. The Lord called me from the womb, from the body of my mother he named my name. He made my mouth like a sharp sword; in the shadow of his hand, he hid me; he made me a polished arrow; in his quiver he hid me away." Similarly, in Jeremiah 1:4-5, we hear, "The word of the Lord came to me, saying, 'Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, before you were born, I set you apart; I appointed you as a prophet to the nations.'" This verse reinforces the message of Isaiah, asserting that God's love for us is not dependent on our actions, achievements, or our perceived worthiness. His love is a pre-existing condition, a truth that was established before our birth and will persist beyond our death. The teachings of Jesus Christ remind us that we are beloved children of God. This profound spiritual truth changes our perspective on everything. It allows us to view ourselves, others, and the world around us through the lens of divine love. Our challenge during this Advent season is to live life through this lens of divine love, to let it guide our actions, our words, and our thoughts. Let us strive to see ourselves and others as God sees us, beloved and precious, and let that realization transform our lives.

**Isaiah 49:1-2 & Jeremiah 1:4-5**

Listen to me, you islands; hear this, you distant nations: Before I was born the Lord called me; from my mother’s womb he has spoken my name. He made my mouth like a sharpened sword; in the shadow of his hand, he hid me; he made me into a polished arrow and concealed me in his quiver. - The word of the Lord came to me, saying, “Before I formed you in the womb I knew[[a](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Isaiah+49%3A1-2+%26+Jeremiah+1%3A4-5+&version=NIV#fen-NIV-18952a)] you,   before you were born I set you apart; I appointed you as a prophet to the nations.”

**Prayer**

Dear Heavenly Father, we come before you with humble hearts, acknowledging your greatness and the depth of your love for us. We thank you for your grace and mercy that is new every day. Lord, we ask for your guidance and wisdom in our daily lives. Help us to see the world through your eyes and to treat others with kindness, love, and understanding. May we always remember that we are your beloved children, created in your image, and destined for your divine purpose. As we go through each day, remind us of your constant presence and unwavering love. When we stumble, give us the strength to rise and the courage to keep moving forward. When we succeed, keep us humble and ever grateful for your blessings. Thank you, God, for your endless love, and for the promise of eternal life through Jesus Christ. We ask all these things in his holy name.

**Action**

One actionable step you can take is to create and follow a daily post Advent bible reading plan. This can be done individually or as a group. Use the "Promised Messiah" plan as a guide and read scriptures that take you through the grand narrative from creation to the birth of Jesus.

**DAY 21: The Universal Gift of Belovedness**

It is often the case that our personal, intimate communion with God opens up pathways to connect with fellow human beings... When you perceive yourself as cherished by God, your viewpoint towards others begins to shift. You start to realise that they, too, are as cherished as you are. This is a profound insight that comes with a spiritual awakening - when you recognize yourself as God's beloved child, you gain a new perspective to see the Belovedness in others.

This is an intriguing contrast to worldly notions. In the world's eyes, being 'special' often means standing out from the rest. If you receive an accolade and are told you're different from others, that accolade holds value because it's not something everyone attains. The world tends to imply that your worth comes from being the best, and that such worth is exclusive. This is where the teachings from Mark 9:33-35 come into play. Jesus emphasises that greatness comes from serving others, not from outdoing them. It's a reminder that, in God's eyes, we are all equally beloved. The world may rank us based on rewards and achievements, but in the divine perspective, our value lies in our ability to serve and love one another.

**Mark 9:33-35**

They came to Capernaum. When he was in the house, he asked them, “What were you arguing about on the road?” But they kept quiet because on the way they had argued about who was the greatest. Sitting down, Jesus called the Twelve and said, “Anyone who wants to be first must be the very last, and the servant of all.”

**Prayer**

Dear Heavenly Father, I come before you today, seeking Your wisdom and understanding. As I reflect upon Your word in Mark 9:33-35, help us to truly grasp the depth of Your teachings. Open my hearts to the universal gift of Belovedness that You bestow upon each of us and help me to see myself and others through Your eyes of infinite love. Give me the courage to shift our perspectives, to let go of worldly notions of superiority, and to understand that true greatness lies in service. Remind us that in Your kingdom, the first shall be last and the last shall be first.

**Action**

In line with the reflection and teachings of Mark 9:33-35, a suggested action could be to volunteer your time and service to those in need within your community. This can be through a local food bank, a homeless shelter, or a community centre. Not only will this embody the essence of service as taught by Jesus, but it will also allow you to recognise the Belovedness in others. This act of kindness and humility will help you to let go of worldly notions of superiority and embrace the true greatness that comes from serving others.

**DAY 22 - Betrayal**

As we traverse the advent season, let's reflect on the profound words of spiritual writer Parker Palmer. He reminds us, "Community is not just a place of love and warmth, but also a place of purification and testing." The advent season, a time of anticipation and preparation for the birth of Jesus Christ, offers us an opportunity to examine our role within our communities. Let's consider the powerful narrative of Judas in Matthew 10:1-4. Judas was one of the twelve apostles chosen by Jesus to help in his earthly ministry. He was part of their community, sharing in their joys, their sorrows, their teachings. Yet, he is remembered primarily for his betrayal of Jesus, leading to his crucifixion.

This narrative can be a difficult pill to swallow. It forces us to confront the uncomfortable truth that we may sometimes play the role of Judas in our own communities. We may have betrayed a friend's trust, spread harmful gossip, or chosen personal gain over the welfare of the community. However, advent is a season of hope and renewal. Just as we can be the cause of harm, we can also be the source of healing. We can seek forgiveness, make amends, and strive to do better.

The purification that Palmer speaks of is not a pleasant process. It involves acknowledging our shortcomings, confronting our mistakes, and working towards change. It's a process that can be painful, but it's also necessary for growth. So, as we journey through this advent season, let’s reflect on our roles in our communities. Let’s acknowledge the times we've played the Judas, seek forgiveness, and strive to be better. Remember, our communities are not just a source of comfort, but they are also agents of purification. They help us grow, improve, and become better versions of ourselves.

**Matthew 10:1-4**

Jesus called his twelve disciples to him and gave them authority to drive out impure spirits and to heal every disease and sickness. These are the names of the twelve apostles: first, Simon (who is called Peter) and his brother Andrew; James son of Zebedee, and his brother John; Philip and Bartholomew; Thomas and Matthew the tax collector; James son of Alphaeus, and Thaddaeus; Simon the Zealot and Judas Iscariot, who betrayed him.

**Prayer**

Heavenly Father, As we gather in the spirit of community, we recognise it as both a shelter of love and a furnace of purification. We are reminded of Your disciples in Matthew 10:1-4, especially Judas, who has shown us the capacity for both love and betrayal that dwells within us all. Guide us, O Lord, in our journey within this community. Purify our hearts, cleanse us of our wrongdoings, and let us seek forgiveness when we falter. Let us strive to be better, just as Judas could have strived. We ask this in the name of Jesus Christ, our Lord and Savior. Amen

**Action**

Let us try not to be a 'Judas', betraying trust for personal gain but aim to be a source of support and growth for others. This can be done by volunteering, helping a neighbour, or simply lending an ear to someone in need. Spiritual Growth: Let's commit to studying the scriptures more deeply, allowing the Holy Spirit to guide our understanding. A practical step could be setting aside a specific time each day for this study and reflection.

**Day 23 The Gift of Forgiveness**

In our journey of faith, we are constantly being shaped by the Lord, much like a potter moulds clay. The teachings of Jesus, specifically in the context of forgiveness, pose a radical challenge to his disciples, both in the past and in the present. It's not just about heeding to his teachings, but about embodying the essence of those teachings in our everyday lives. It's about making a commitment to follow Jesus wholeheartedly, yearning for change, and striving to become the person He envisions us to be. The passage from Luke 17:3-4 underscores the significance of vigilance over our attitudes and decisions, and the importance of taking responsibility for our actions. It highlights the three-step process of forgiveness: rebuke, repentance, and forgiveness. It encourages us to confront the pain, be honest about our feelings when we are hurt, and extend forgiveness when there is genuine repentance. However, it also cautions that trust, once broken, may not be easily mended in the absence of true repentance. The apostles initially believed it would take tremendous faith to forgive deeply and repeatedly, focusing on the quantity of faith. However, Jesus subtly corrected them, emphasizing the quality of faith, not its quantity, as the key to profound forgiveness. In an ideal world, repentance and forgiveness would suffice for harmonious coexistence. Yet, the world we inhabit is far from ideal, hence, the journey to forgiveness can be challenging, yet it's a journey worth embarking on.

**Luke 17:3-4**

So, watch yourselves. “If your brother or sister[[a](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Luke+17%3A3-4+&version=NIV#fen-NIV-25655a)] sins against you, rebuke them; and if they repent, forgive them. Even if they sin against you seven times in a day and seven times come back to you saying, ‘I repent,’ you must forgive them.”

**Prayer**

Dear Heavenly Father, we come to You with humble hearts, acknowledging your divine grace. We are grateful for Your unending love and mercy, which shines even in our darkest hours. As we reflect upon the teachings of Luke 17:3-4, guide us, O Lord, to understand the true essence of forgiveness. Teach us to rebuke gently, to repent sincerely, and to forgive unconditionally. May we, like You, extend mercy and grace to those who have wronged us, demonstrating the same patience you show us daily. Help us to uphold trust and faith, to offer and accept forgiveness, and to seek unity and peace, even in the face of adversity. Remind us that forgiveness is not a momentary act, but a continuous journey, and that through it, we honour You. We pray that You guide our hearts and minds towards understanding and compassion, that we may become better reflections of Your love. In Jesus' name, we pray. Amen.

**Action**

A simple and sensible action to reflect this teaching would be to approach someone you may have wronged or hurt intentionally or unintentionally. Start by acknowledging the mistake or misunderstanding and then sincerely ask for their forgiveness. Remember, this act is not just about mending relationships but about cultivating personal growth and spiritual humility as well. It's a step towards embodying the teachings of Jesus as expressed in Luke 17: 3-4, about forgiving and asking for forgiveness.

**DAY 24: A Divine Summons**

In the heart of Christmas, we are reminded that God, in his infinite love, chose to walk amongst us. He sought to share our journey, to resonate with our narratives, and to reassure us that our path leads not to aimlessness but towards a sanctuary of tranquillity and delight. This profound enigma of Christmas remains our solace and hope: we are never solitary in our voyage. The loving Divine, who gifted us existence, graced us with His only Son as an enduring companion in every place and every moment. We are never left aimlessly in our trials but can always find confidence that He is with us. Luke 12:32-33 echoes, "Fear not, little flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom. Sell your possessions and give to the needy. Provide yourselves with moneybags that do not grow old, with a treasure in the heavens that does not fail, where no thief approaches and no moth destroy." This is a gentle reminder that our worldly possessions are but transient, and it is in giving that we receive the everlasting. The rebirth of Christmas is a reaffirmation, a call to cast away our fears. We are invited to embrace Him, whose love surpasses all understanding, to be our lifelong companion. For His love is greater than any love we can ever comprehend, and it is this love that we celebrate on this Christmas Eve.

**Luke 12:32-33**

“Do not be afraid, little flock, for your Father has been pleased to give you the kingdom. Sell your possessions and give to the poor. Provide purses for yourselves that will not wear out, a treasure in heaven that will never fail, where no thief comes near, and no moth destroys.

**Prayer**

Dear Heavenly Father,

On this sacred Christmas Eve, we gather our hearts in humble reflection of your boundless love. You, who gave the world the gift of Your Son, remind us of the true essence of this season - love, peace, and generosity. Lord, as we contemplate the words of Luke 12:32-33, help us grasp the transient nature of earthly possessions. Teach us to hold lightly to the material things of this world, and to cling tightly to the treasures of heaven - love, kindness, compassion, and justice.

As the star shone brightly over Bethlehem, let the light of Christ shine brightly within us. Help us realize that Christmas is not merely a day, but a state of heart, a reminder that you chose to walk amongst us, sharing our journey, our joys, and our sorrows. Guide us to be bearers of Your love, to share generously, just as You have shared with us. Let our actions reflect Your grace, a beacon of hope to those in darkness. On this Christmas Eve, we pause to thank You for the blessings of the past year. We acknowledge our shortcomings and ask for Your guidance in the year to come. As we welcome the Christ Child into our homes and hearts, let us also welcome all the lessons He brings - lessons of humility, sacrifice, and unending love. May the joy of Your presence surpass all understanding, wrapping us in peace this Christmas Eve and always. In the name of Jesus Christ, our Lord and Savior, we pray. Amen.

**Action.**

Today so something that this reflection across the last 23 days has taught you.

**DAY 25 Christmas: A Unified Blessing of Life**

In the midst of this season some years ago, it dawned on me that the essence of Christmas extends beyond the harmonious melodies, joyful sentiments, grand ceremonies, thoughtful gifts, lavish feasts, or comforting words. It is not these that truly encapsulate Christmas. Rather, Christmas signifies an affirmation, a heartfelt "yes" to an ethereal truth that transcends all human emotions and perceptions. It is embracing a hope that is rooted not in our own whims or feelings, but in God's mysterious plan. Christmas, in its truest sense, is the belief that the redemption of mankind is not our responsibility but God's divine undertaking. Our world will always have its flaws; its perfection is but an illusion. If everything seemed faultless, it would only indicate a deception. However, amidst the imperfections of this world, a miraculous event transpires. A child is born, who is titled the Son of the Most High, the Prince of Peace, the Savior. In the words of Luke 2:1-7, amidst humble surroundings and simple folk, a Savior is born. This event is not just an isolated incident but a divine response to our broken world. Christmas, therefore, is a universal blessing, touching every aspect of creation, reminding us of God's boundless love and His divine plan for salvation. It is a day that calls us to say "yes" to hope, faith, and the belief that God is the author of our salvation. So, as we celebrate this day, let's remember that Christmas is more than the festivities. It is a divine affirmation, a beacon of hope, and a reminder of God's initiative in our salvation. It is the day when Heaven touched the earth, and God became man to save us. It is the day when Christmas indeed touches the whole of creation.

**Luke 2:1-7**

In those days Caesar Augustus issued a decree that a census should be taken of the entire Roman world. (This was the first census that took place while[a] Quirinius was governor of Syria.) And everyone went to their own town to register. So Joseph also went up from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to Judea, to Bethlehem the town of David, because he belonged to the house and line of David. He went there to register with Mary, who was pledged to be married to him and was expecting a child. While they were there, the time came for the baby to be born, and she gave birth to her firstborn, a son. She wrapped him in cloths and placed him in a manger, because there was no guest room available for them.

**Prayer**

Dear Heavenly Father, as we journey through this season of Advent, we pause to reflect on the birth of our Savior, Jesus Christ. Inspired by Luke 2:1-7, we are reminded that in the humblest of circumstances, a great Light was born into our world. In the quiet and ordinary moments, your extraordinary love was revealed. Help us, Lord, to recognise and cherish these moments in our lives, just as the shepherds did on that holy night. May we be filled with a renewed sense of awe and gratitude for the gift of Your Son. We pray for the grace to move beyond the materialistic aspects of this season and to truly embrace the profound hope and joy that comes from the birth of Jesus. Lord, let our hearts be the manger where Your love is born anew each day. As we anticipate the celebration of His birth, may we be instruments of Your peace and love in this broken world. May we touch the lives of others with kindness, just as Your love has touched us. In this holy season of anticipation and hope, we affirm our faith in You and in Your divine plan for our salvation. In Jesus' name, we pray. Amen.

**Action**

Go in peace, to love and serve the Lord.