# My Utmost for His Highest – 12/22/20

# The Drawing of the Father



No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him… —[John 6:44](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?version=31&search=John+6%3A44)

When God begins to draw me to Himself, the problem of my will comes in immediately. Will I react positively to the truth that God has revealed? Will I come to Him? To discuss or deliberate over spiritual matters when God calls is inappropriate and disrespectful to Him. When God speaks, never discuss it with anyone as if to decide what your response may be (see [Galatians 1:15-16](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Galatians+1:15-16)). Belief is not the result of an intellectual act, but the result of an act of my will whereby I deliberately commit myself. But will I commit, placing myself completely and absolutely on God, and be willing to act solely on what He says? If I will, I will find that I am grounded on reality as certain as God’s throne.

In preaching the gospel, always focus on the matter of the will. Belief must come from the will to believe. There must be a surrender of the will, not a surrender to a persuasive or powerful argument. I must deliberately step out, placing my faith in God and in His truth. And I must place no confidence in my own works, but only in God. Trusting in my own mental understanding becomes a hindrance to complete trust in God. I must be willing to ignore and leave my feelings behind. I must will to believe. But this can never be accomplished without my forceful, determined effort to separate myself from my old ways of looking at things. I must surrender myself completely to God.

Everyone has been created with the ability to reach out beyond his own grasp. But it is God who draws me, and my relationship to Him in the first place is an inner, personal one, not an intellectual one. I come into the relationship through the miracle of God and through my own will to believe. Then I begin to get an intelligent appreciation and understanding of the wonder of the transformation in my life.

**WISDOM FROM OSWALD CHAMBERS**

Both nations and individuals have tried Christianity and abandoned it, because it has been found too difficult; but no man has ever gone through the crisis of deliberately making Jesus Lord and found Him to be a failure.

The Love of God—The Making of a Christian, 680 R

# CCEL – 12/22/20

**Your work of faith.**—[I THES. 1:3.](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.iThess.1.html" \l "iThess.1.3)

This is the work of God, that ye believe on him whom he hath sent.

Faith, if it hath not works, is dead, being alone.—Faith worketh by love.—He that soweth to his flesh, shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting.—We are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them.—Who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works.

We are bound to thank God always for you, brethren, as it is meet, because that your faith groweth exceedingly, and the charity of every one of you all toward each other aboundeth. Wherefore also we pray always for you, that our God would count you worthy of this calling, and fulfil all the good pleasure of his goodness, and the work of faith with power.—It is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure.

[John 6:29](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.John.6.html#John.6.29).[Jas. 2:17](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Jas.2.html" \l "Jas.2.17). -[Gal. 5:6](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Gal.5.html" \l "Gal.5.6). -[Gal. 6:8](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Gal.6.html" \l "Gal.6.8). -[Eph. 2:10](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Eph.2.html" \l "Eph.2.10). -[Tit. 2:14](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Titus.2.html" \l "Titus.2.14).[II Thes. 1:3](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.iiThess.1.html" \l "iiThess.1.3),[11](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.iiThess.1.html" \l "iiThess.1.11). -[Phi 2:13](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Phil.2.html" \l "Phil.2.13).

“I will strengthen thee.” **[Isaiah 41:10](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Isa.41.html" \l "Isa.41.10)**

God has a strong reserve with which to discharge this engagement; for he is able to do all things. Believer, till thou canst drain dry the ocean of omnipotence, till thou canst break into pieces the towering mountains of almighty strength, thou never needest to fear. Think not that the strength of man shall ever be able to overcome the power of God. Whilst the earth’s huge pillars stand, thou hast enough reason to abide firm in thy faith. The same God who directs the earth in its orbit, who feeds the burning furnace of the sun, and trims the lamps of heaven, has promised to supply thee with daily strength. While he is able to uphold the universe, dream not that he will prove unable to fulfil his own promises. Remember what he did in the days of old, in the former generations. Remember how he spake and it was done; how he commanded, and it stood fast. Shall he that created the world grow weary? He hangeth the world upon nothing; shall he who doth this be unable to support his children? Shall he be unfaithful to his word for want of power? Who is it that restrains the tempest? Doth not he ride upon the wings of the wind, and make the clouds his chariots, and hold the ocean in the hollow of his hand? How can he fail thee? When he has put such a faithful promise as this on record, wilt thou for a moment indulge the thought that he has outpromised himself, and gone beyond his power to fulfil? Ah, no! Thou canst doubt no longer.

O thou who art my God and my strength, I can believe that this promise shall be fulfilled, for the boundless reservoir of thy grace can never be exhausted, and the overflowing storehouse of thy strength can never be emptied by thy friends or rifled by thine enemies.

“Now let the feeble all be strong,

And make Jehovah’s arm their song.”

# Word Live – 12/22/20

# <https://content.scriptureunion.org.uk/wordlive/>

# Scripture Union – 12/22/20

[**https://scriptureunion.org/encounters/**](https://scriptureunion.org/encounters/)

# Today in the Word – 12/22/20

# Christ, the Hope of David

**Read:** [**Luke 1:26–38**](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Luke+1%3a26%e2%80%9338)

### **The Birth of Jesus Foretold**

26In the sixth month of Elizabeth’s pregnancy, God sent the angel Gabriel to Nazareth, a town in Galilee, 27to a virgin pledged to be married to a man named Joseph, a descendant of David. The virgin’s name was Mary. 28The angel went to her and said, “Greetings, you who are highly favored! The Lord is with you.”

29Mary was greatly troubled at his words and wondered what kind of greeting this might be. 30But the angel said to her, “Do not be afraid, Mary; you have found favor with God. 31You will conceive and give birth to a son, and you are to call him Jesus. 32He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give him the throne of his father David, 33and he will reign over Jacob’s descendants forever; his kingdom will never end.”

34“How will this be,” Mary asked the angel, “since I am a virgin?”

35The angel answered, “The Holy Spirit will come on you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. So the holy one to be born will be called[[a](https://classic.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Luke+1%3a26%e2%80%9338#fen-NIV-24929a)] the Son of God. 36Even Elizabeth your relative is going to have a child in her old age, and she who was said to be unable to conceive is in her sixth month. 37For no word from God will ever fail.”

38“I am the Lord’s servant,” Mary answered. “May your word to me be fulfilled.” Then the angel left her.

#### **Footnotes:**

1. [Luke 1:35](https://classic.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Luke+1%3a26%e2%80%9338#en-NIV-24929) Or So the child to be born will be called holy,

When the angels appeared, delivering an important announcement, they were fulfilling a Messianic prophecy: “The Lord himself will give you a sign: The virgin will conceive and give birth to a son, and will call him Immanuel,” meaning “God with us” (Isa. 7:14). As the gospels repeatedly point out, many aspects of the Christmas story fulfill Old Testament prophecies. How is this possible? Because we serve a God who plans and determines all of history.

The Lord God will give him the throne of his father David. Luke 1:32

This is yet another reason for us to trust Him! That’s what Mary did when confronted with the incredible message from Gabriel: She would be the mother of the Messiah, who would also be the Son of God. She was “greatly troubled” because she was a virgin, betrothed but not yet married to Joseph (vv. 29, 34). Gabriel answered by reassuring her that God would be with her (v. 35). For Mary, that was all she needed to know, but he also graciously communicated to her another sign: her relative Elizabeth’s pregnancy (v. 36).

More than one prophecy was being fulfilled in Gabriel’s words. Mary’s child, the long-awaited Messiah (see Luke 3:15), would sit on the throne of David (both Mary and Joseph were descendants) (vv. 31–33, 35). “His kingdom will never end” fulfills 2 Samuel 7:16 from God’s covenant with David. Perhaps unexpectedly, the child would also be the “Son of the Most High” and the “Son of God,” that is, the Second Person of the Trinity (v. 35). Jesus, conceived in Mary by the Holy Spirit, would be fully man and fully God! Mary responded in faith, understanding that “no word from God will ever fail,” or as another translation says, “nothing will be impossible with God” (vv. 37–38).

**Apply the Word**

If you are interested in learning more about biblical prophecy, Moody professor and Q&A columnist Michael Rydelnik co-edited the [Moody Handbook of Messianic Prophecy.](https://www.moodypublishers.com/the-moody-handbook-of-messianic-prophecy/) Add it to your Bible study reference collection.

### **Pray with Us**

As Christmas quickly approaches, we remember that Christ already fulfilled many Old Testament prophecies. Lord, thank you for the assurance and the promises you give in your Word. Thank you for being a God we can trust.

## BY Brad Baurain

# Our Daily Bread – 12/22/20

# Curling Up with the Good Book

 **Read:** [**2 Timothy 3:14–17**](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2%20Tim%203.14%E2%80%9317)

14But as for you, continue in what you have learned and have become convinced of, because you know those from whom you learned it, 15and how from infancy you have known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. 16All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, 17so that the servant of God[[a](https://classic.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=2+Timothy+3%3A14%E2%80%9317&version=NIV#fen-NIV-29871a)] may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.

#### **Footnotes:**

1. [2 Timothy 3:17](https://classic.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=2+Timothy+3%3A14%E2%80%9317&version=NIV#en-NIV-29871) Or that you, a man of God,

All Scripture is God-breathed. [2 Timothy 3:16](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2%20Tim%203.16)

The small country of Iceland is a nation of readers. In fact, it’s reported that each year this nation publishes and reads more books per person than any other country. On Christmas Eve, it’s a tradition for Icelanders to give books to family and friends and then read long into the night. This tradition dates back to World War II, when imports were restricted but paper was cheap. Icelandic publishers began flooding the market with new titles in late fall. Now a catalog of the country’s new releases is sent to every Icelandic home in mid-November. This tradition is known as the Christmas Book Flood.

We can be thankful God blessed so many with the ability to craft a good story and to educate, inspire, or motivate others through their words. There’s nothing like a good book! The best-selling book of all, the Bible, was composed by many authors who wrote in poetry and prose—some great stories, some not so—but all of it inspired. As the apostle Paul reminded Timothy, “All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness” and equipping God’s people “for every good work” ([2 Timothy 3:16–17](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2%20Tim%203.16%E2%80%9317)). Reading the Bible convicts, inspires, and helps us to live for Him—and guides us into the truth (2:15).

In our reading, let’s not forget to find time to curl up with the greatest book of all, the Bible.

By:  [Alyson Kieda](https://odb.org/author/akieda/)

#### **Reflect & Pray**

What have you read lately that helped you learn more about or draw closer to God? What helps you to spend time in Scripture?

God, thank You for inspiring creativity in the authors of “many books.” I’m especially thankful for Your Book.

To learn more about the book God wrote to us, visit [ChristianUniversity.org/SF105](https://ChristianUniversity.org/SF105).

#### **Insight**

When Paul spoke of the “Holy Scriptures” in [2 Timothy 3:15](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2%20Tim%203.15), he referred to what we know today as the Old Testament. Yet, he noted that such sacred writings “are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus.” In [Luke 24](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Luke%2024), Jesus essentially said the same thing to His disciples after His resurrection: “ ‘This is what I told you while I was still with you: Everything must be fulfilled that is written about me in the Law of Moses, the Prophets and the Psalms.’ Then he opened their minds so they could understand the Scriptures” (vv. 44–45). The apostles preached about Jesus from the same Scriptures. “[Paul] witnessed to them from morning till evening, explaining about the kingdom of God, and from the Law of Moses and from the Prophets he tried to persuade them about Jesus” ([Acts 28:23](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Acts%2028.23)).

# God Calling – 12/22/20

# Practice Protection

Fear no evil because I have conquered evil. It has power to hurt only those who do not place themselves under My Protection. This is not a question of feeling, it is an assured fact.

All you have to do is say with assurance that whatever it is cannot harm you, as I have conquered it. Children, in not only the big, but the little things of life, be sure of My conquering Power. Know that all is well. Be sure of it. Practice this. Learn it until it is unfailing and instinctive with you.

But practice it in the quite small things, and then you will find you will do it easily, naturally, lovingly, trustingly, in the big things of life.

"Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me." Psalm 23:4

# My Utmost for His Highest – 12/23/20

# Sharing in the Atonement



God forbid that I should boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus

Christ… —[Galatians 6:14](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?version=31&search=Galatians+6%3A14)

The gospel of Jesus Christ always forces a decision of our will. Have I accepted God’s verdict on sin as judged on the Cross of Christ? Do I have even the slightest interest in the death of Jesus? Do I want to be identified with His death— to be completely dead to all interest in sin, worldliness, and self? Do I long to be so closely identified with Jesus that I am of no value for anything except Him and His purposes? The great privilege of discipleship is that I can commit myself under the banner of His Cross, and that means death to sin. You must get alone with Jesus and either decide to tell Him that you do not want sin to die out in you, or that at any cost you want to be identified with His death. When you act in confident faith in what our Lord did on the cross, a supernatural identification with His death takes place immediately. And you will come to know through a higher knowledge that your old life was “crucified with Him” ([Romans 6:6](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Romans+6:6)). The proof that your old life is dead, having been “crucified with Christ” ([Galatians 2:20](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Galatians+2:20)), is the amazing ease with which the life of God in you now enables you to obey the voice of Jesus Christ.

Every once in a while our Lord gives us a glimpse of what we would be like if it were not for Him. This is a confirmation of what He said— “…without Me you can do nothing” ([John 15:5](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=John+15:5)). That is why the underlying foundation of Christianity is personal, passionate devotion to the Lord Jesus. We mistake the joy of our first introduction into God’s kingdom as His purpose for getting us there. Yet God’s purpose in getting us into His kingdom is that we may realize all that identification with Jesus Christ means.

**WISDOM FROM OSWALD CHAMBERS**

We should always choose our books as God chooses our friends, just a bit beyond us, so that we have to do our level best to keep up with them.

Shade of His Hand, 1216 L

# CCEL – 12/23/20

**Let him take hold of my strength, that he may make peace with me.**—[ISA. 27:5.](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Isa.27.html" \l "Isa.27.5)

I know the thoughts that I think toward you, saith the Lord, thoughts of peace, and not of evil.—There is no peace, saith the Lord, unto the wicked.

In Christ Jesus ye who sometime were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ. For he is our peace.

It pleased the Father that in him should all fulness dwell: and having made peace through the blood of his cross, by him to reconcile all things unto himself.—Christ Jesus: whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past: . . . that he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus.—If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

Trust ye in the Lord for ever, for in the Lord Jehovah is everlasting strength.

[Jer. 29:11](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Jer.29.html" \l "Jer.29.11). -[Isa. 48:22](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Isa.48.html" \l "Isa.48.22).[Eph. 2:13,14](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Eph.2.html" \l "Eph.2.13).[Col. 1:19,20](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Col.1.html" \l "Col.1.19). -[Rom. 3:24-26](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Rom.3.html" \l "Rom.3.24). -[I John 1:9](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.iJohn.1.html" \l "iJohn.1.9).[Isa. 26:4](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Isa.26.html" \l "Isa.26.4).

“Friend, go up higher.” [Luke 14:10](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Luke.14.html" \l "Luke.14.10)

When first the life of grace begins in the soul, we do indeed draw near to God, but it is with great fear and trembling. The soul conscious of guilt, and humbled thereby, is overawed with the solemnity of its position; it is cast to the earth by a sense of the grandeur of Jehovah, in whose presence it stands. With unfeigned bashfulness it takes the lowest room.

But, in after life, as the Christian grows in grace, although he will never forget the solemnity of his position, and will never lose that holy awe which must encompass a gracious man when he is in the presence of the God who can create or can destroy; yet his fear has all its terror taken out of it; it becomes a holy reverence, and no more an overshadowing dread. He is called up higher, to greater access to God in Christ Jesus. Then the man of God, walking amid the splendours of Deity, and veiling his face like the glorious cherubim, with those twin wings, the blood and righteousness of Jesus Christ, will, reverent and bowed in spirit, approach the throne; and seeing there a God of love, of goodness, and of mercy, he will realize rather the covenant character of God than his absolute Deity. He will see in God rather his goodness than his greatness, and more of his love than of his majesty. Then will the soul, bowing still as humbly as aforetime, enjoy a more sacred liberty of intercession; for while prostrate before the glory of the Infinite God, it will be sustained by the refreshing consciousness of being in the presence of boundless mercy and infinite love, and by the realization of acceptance “in the Beloved.” Thus the believer is bidden to come up higher, and is enabled to exercise the privilege of rejoicing in God, and drawing near to him in holy confidence, saying, “Abba, Father.”

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“So may we go from strength to strength,

And daily grow in grace,

Till in thine image raised at length,

We see thee face to face.”

# Word Live – 12/23/20

# <https://content.scriptureunion.org.uk/wordlive/>

# Scripture Union – 12/23/20

[**https://scriptureunion.org/encounters/**](https://scriptureunion.org/encounters/)

# Today in the Word – 12/23/20

# The Hope of Immanuel

**Read:** [**Matthew 1:18–25**](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Matthew+1%3a18%e2%80%9325)

### **Joseph Accepts Jesus as His Son**

18This is how the birth of Jesus the Messiah came about[[a](https://classic.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Matthew+1%3a18%e2%80%9325#fen-NIV-23163a)]: His mother Mary was pledged to be married to Joseph, but before they came together, she was found to be pregnant through the Holy Spirit. 19Because Joseph her husband was faithful to the law, and yet[[b](https://classic.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Matthew+1%3a18%e2%80%9325#fen-NIV-23164b)] did not want to expose her to public disgrace, he had in mind to divorce her quietly.

20But after he had considered this, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, “Joseph son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary home as your wife, because what is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. 21She will give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus,[[c](https://classic.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Matthew+1%3a18%e2%80%9325#fen-NIV-23166c)] because he will save his people from their sins.”

22All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had said through the prophet: 23“The virgin will conceive and give birth to a son, and they will call him Immanuel”[[d](https://classic.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Matthew+1%3a18%e2%80%9325#fen-NIV-23168d)] (which means “God with us”).

24When Joseph woke up, he did what the angel of the Lord had commanded him and took Mary home as his wife. 25But he did not consummate their marriage until she gave birth to a son. And he gave him the name Jesus.

#### **Footnotes:**

1. [Matthew 1:18](https://classic.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Matthew+1%3a18%e2%80%9325#en-NIV-23163) Or The origin of Jesus the Messiah was like this
2. [Matthew 1:19](https://classic.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Matthew+1%3a18%e2%80%9325#en-NIV-23164) Or was a righteous man and
3. [Matthew 1:21](https://classic.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Matthew+1%3a18%e2%80%9325#en-NIV-23166) Jesus is the Greek form of Joshua, which means the Lord saves.
4. [Matthew 1:23](https://classic.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Matthew+1%3a18%e2%80%9325#en-NIV-23168) Isaiah 7:14

“O Come, O Come Emmanuel” is a beloved Christmas carol, saturated with longing for God’s promised Messiah. We celebrate not only His coming as a baby at Christmas, which lies in the past, but also His Second Coming in glory, which lies in our future. Dating back to the eighth or ninth century, it’s one of the oldest carols we still sing today. Think of it— we’re singing about the same Savior as believers did 1,200 years ago!

The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. John 1:14

We celebrate the hope brought by Immanuel, meaning “God with us.” While Gabriel announced this good news to Mary, an angel of the Lord shared the news with her betrothed husband-to-be, Joseph. Mary had of course told him her story, but it was just too unbelievable (v. 18). A virgin birth? Seriously? So he’d decided to divorce her quietly rather than proceed with marriage to an apparently immoral and dishonest woman (v. 19).

Then the angel appeared to him in a dream and confirmed Mary’s truthfulness. The child was conceived by the Holy Spirit and would “save his people from their sins” (vv. 20–21). This was another way of saying Jesus was the Messiah and the Son of God, as had been prophesied long ago by Isaiah (vv. 22–23). The name “Jesus” means “the Lord saves.”

Joseph’s response was impressive (vv. 24–25). Consider the stakes: If he believed the dream and married Mary, but it was false, then his life was ruined and society would view him as a prize idiot. Nonetheless, he trusted God, married her, and named the child Jesus. For them as a couple, then, the hope of Christmas had both personal and cosmic implications. God’s redemption is always both— the fact that He is with us affects us as individuals as well as the whole world.

**Apply the Word**

During your personal time of worship and reflection today, listen to the carol, “O Come, O Come Emmanuel,” or even sing aloud. You can look up all the verses in a hymnal or online!

### **Pray with Us**

Lord Jesus, you came to earth as a baby, and you have promised to return and take us with you to our Father’s house. Even as we celebrate the peace of this season, we look forward to your Second Coming. Come, Emmanuel!

## BY Brad Baurain

# Our Daily Bread – 12/23/20

# No Glitz, Just Glory

 **Read:** [**Isaiah 53:1–9**](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa%2053.1%E2%80%939)

53 Who has believed our message  
    and to whom has the arm of the Lord been revealed?  
2He grew up before him like a tender shoot,  
    and like a root out of dry ground.  
He had no beauty or majesty to attract us to him,  
    nothing in his appearance that we should desire him.  
3He was despised and rejected by mankind,  
    a man of suffering, and familiar with pain.  
Like one from whom people hide their faces  
    he was despised, and we held him in low esteem.

4Surely he took up our pain  
    and bore our suffering,  
yet we considered him punished by God,  
    stricken by him, and afflicted.  
5But he was pierced for our transgressions,  
    he was crushed for our iniquities;  
the punishment that brought us peace was on him,  
    and by his wounds we are healed.  
6We all, like sheep, have gone astray,  
    each of us has turned to our own way;  
and the Lord has laid on him  
    the iniquity of us all.

7He was oppressed and afflicted,  
    yet he did not open his mouth;  
he was led like a lamb to the slaughter,  
    and as a sheep before its shearers is silent,  
    so he did not open his mouth.  
8By oppression[[a](https://classic.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Isaiah+53%3A1%E2%80%939&version=NIV#fen-NIV-18720a)] and judgment he was taken away.  
    Yet who of his generation protested?  
For he was cut off from the land of the living;  
    for the transgression of my people he was punished.[[b](https://classic.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Isaiah+53%3A1%E2%80%939&version=NIV#fen-NIV-18720b)]  
9He was assigned a grave with the wicked,  
    and with the rich in his death,  
though he had done no violence,  
    nor was any deceit in his mouth.

#### **Footnotes:**

1. [Isaiah 53:8](https://classic.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Isaiah+53%3A1%E2%80%939&version=NIV#en-NIV-18720) Or From arrest
2. [Isaiah 53:8](https://classic.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Isaiah+53%3A1%E2%80%939&version=NIV#en-NIV-18720) Or generation considered / that he was cut off from the land of the living, / that he was punished for the transgression of my people?

Because your love is better than life, my lips will glorify you. [Psalm 63:3](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps%2063.3)

Looking at the handmade Christmas ornaments my son, Xavier, crafted over the years and the annual mismatched baubles Grandma had sent him, I couldn’t figure out why I was not content with our decorations. I’d always valued the creativity and memories each ornament represented. So, why did the allure of the retail stores’ holiday displays tempt me to desire a tree adorned with perfectly matched bulbs, shimmering orbs, and satin ribbons?

As I began to turn away from our humble decor, I glimpsed a red, heart-shaped ornament with a simple phrase scripted on it—Jesus, My Savior. How could I have forgotten that my family and my hope in Christ are the reasons I love celebrating Christmas? Our simple tree looked nothing like the trees in the storefronts, but the love behind every decoration made it beautiful.

Like our modest tree, the Messiah didn’t meet the world’s expectations in any way ([Isaiah 53:2](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa%2053.2)). Jesus “was despised and rejected” (v. 3). Yet, in an amazing display of love, He still chose to be “pierced for our transgressions” (v. 5). He endured punishment, so we could enjoy peace (v. 5). Nothing is more beautiful than that.

With renewed gratitude for our imperfect decorations and our perfect Savior, I stopped longing for glitz and praised God for His glorious love. Sparkling adornments could never match the beauty of His sacrificial gift—Jesus.

By:  [Xochitl Dixon](https://odb.org/author/xochitldixon/)

#### **Reflect & Pray**

How can you make praising Jesus part of your Christmas celebration? What does His sacrifice on the cross mean to you?

Loving God, please help me see the beautiful love reflected through the magnitude of Your sacrifice.

#### **Insight**

The book of Isaiah was a vision given by God and recorded by the prophet Isaiah (1:1), whose name means “Yahweh is salvation.” Isaiah ministered in Judah during the reigns of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah (1:1) from about 740 to 680 bc. He appears to have lived in Jerusalem (7:1–3), was the son of Amoz (1:1), was married to a prophetess (8:3), and had two sons given symbolic names (7:3; 8:3). The central theme of the book is God, who does all things for His “own sake” (48:11). The heart of Isaiah’s message is God’s purpose of grace for sinners, as seen in our passage today and elsewhere.

# God Calling – 12/23/20

# The World's Song

**Bless us, O Lord, we beseech Thee and show us the way in which Thou wouldst have us walk.**

Walk with Me in the way of Peace. Shed Peace, not discord, wherever you go. But it must be My Peace.

Never a Peace that is a truce with the power of evil. Never harmony if that means your life-music being adapted to the mood and music of the world.

My disciples so often make the mistake of thinking all must be harmonious. No! Not when it means singing the song of the world.

I, the Prince of Peace, said that I came "not to bring Peace but a sword."

"And let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to the which also we are called...and be ye thankful." Colossians 3:15

# My Utmost for His Highest – 12/24/20

# The Hidden Life



…your life is hidden with Christ in God. —[Colossians 3:3](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?version=31&search=Colossians+3%3A3)

The Spirit of God testifies to and confirms the simple, but almighty, security of the life that “is hidden with Christ in God.” Paul continually brought this out in his New Testament letters. We talk as if living a sanctified life were the most uncertain and insecure thing we could do. Yet it is the most secure thing possible, because it has Almighty God in and behind it. The most dangerous and unsure thing is to try to live without God. For one who is born again, it is easier to live in a right-standing relationship with God than it is to go wrong, provided we heed God’s warnings and “walk in the light” ([1 John 1:7](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=1+John+1:7)).

When we think of being delivered from sin, being “filled with the Spirit” ([Ephesians 5:18](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Ephesians+5:18)), and “walk[ing] in the light,” we picture the peak of a great mountain. We see it as very high and wonderful, but we say, “Oh, I could never live up there!” However, when we do get there through God’s grace, we find it is not a mountain peak at all, but a plateau with plenty of room to live and to grow. “You enlarged my path under me, so my feet did not slip” ([Psalm 18:36](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Psalm+18:36)).

When you really see Jesus, I defy you to doubt Him. If you see Him when He says, “Let not your heart be troubled…” ([John 14:27](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=John+14:27)), I defy you to worry. It is virtually impossible to doubt when He is there. Every time you are in personal contact with Jesus, His words are real to you. “My peace I give to you…” ([John 14:27](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=John+14:27))— a peace which brings an unconstrained confidence and covers you completely, from the top of your head to the soles of your feet. “…your life is hidden with Christ in God,” and the peace of Jesus Christ that cannot be disturbed has been imparted to you.

**WISDOM FROM OSWALD CHAMBERS**

We can understand the attributes of God in other ways, but we can only understand the Father’s heart in the Cross of Christ.

The Highest Good—Thy Great Redemption, 558 L

# CCEL – 12/24/20

**If ye live after the flesh, ye shall die: but if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live.**—[ROM. 8:13.](http://www.ccel.org/study/Romans_8:13)

Now the works of the flesh are manifest which are these; adultery, fornication and such like: of the which I tell you before, as I have also told you in time past, that they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God. But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance: against such there is no law. And they that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts. If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit.

The grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world; looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ; who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity.

[Gal. 5:19](http://www.ccel.org/study/Galatians_5:19),[21-25](http://www.ccel.org/study/Galatians_5:21-25).[Tit. 2:11-14](http://www.ccel.org/study/Titus_2:11-14).

“For your sakes he became poor.” [2 Corinthians 8:9](http://www.ccel.org/study/2_Corinthians%208:9)

The Lord Jesus Christ was eternally rich, glorious, and exalted; but “though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor.” As the rich saint cannot be true in his communion with his poor brethren unless of his substance he ministers to their necessities, so (the same rule holding with the head as between the members), it is impossible that our Divine Lord could have had fellowship with us unless he had imparted to us of his own abounding wealth, and had become poor to make us rich. Had he remained upon his throne of glory, and had we continued in the ruins of the fall without receiving his salvation, communion would have been impossible on both sides. Our position by the fall, apart from the covenant of grace, made it as impossible for fallen man to communicate with God as it is for Belial to be in concord with Christ. In order, therefore, that communion might be compassed, it was necessary that the rich kinsman should bestow his estate upon his poor relatives, that the righteous Saviour should give to his sinning brethren of his own perfection, and that we, the poor and guilty, should receive of his fulness grace for grace; that thus in giving and receiving, the One might descend from the heights, and the other ascend from the depths, and so be able to embrace each other in true and hearty fellowship. Poverty must be enriched by him in whom are infinite treasures before it can venture to commune; and guilt must lose itself in imputed and imparted righteousness ere the soul can walk in fellowship with purity. Jesus must clothe his people in his own garments, or he cannot admit them into his palace of glory; and he must wash them in his own blood, or else they will be too defiled for the embrace of his fellowship.

O believer, herein is love! For your sake the Lord Jesus “became poor” that he might lift you up into communion with himself.

# Word Live – 12/24/20

# <https://content.scriptureunion.org.uk/wordlive/>

# Scripture Union – 12/24/20

[**https://scriptureunion.org/encounters/**](https://scriptureunion.org/encounters/)

# Today in the Word – 12/24/20

# The Birth of Our Savior

**Read:** [**Luke 2:1–7**](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Luke+2%3a1%e2%80%937)

### **The Birth of Jesus**

2 In those days Caesar Augustus issued a decree that a census should be taken of the entire Roman world. 2(This was the first census that took place while[[a](https://classic.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Luke+2%3a1%e2%80%937#fen-NIV-24976a)] Quirinius was governor of Syria.) 3And everyone went to their own town to register.

4So 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. 5He went there to register with Mary, who was pledged to be married to him and was expecting a child. 6While they were there, the time came for the baby to be born, 7and 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.

#### **Footnotes:**

1. [Luke 2:2](https://classic.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Luke+2%3a1%e2%80%937#en-NIV-24976) Or This census took place before

On Christmas Eve, 2019, a special baby arrived at the Potter Park Zoo in Michigan. A male black rhino calf was delivered safely, which is significant because only 5,000 of these critically endangered animals remain in the wild in Africa. While we may get excited about the birth of a rare black rhino, how much better should we feel about the birth of Jesus, the Incarnation of the Second Person of the Trinity! One is exciting, but the other is life-changing.

She wrapped him in cloths and placed him in a manger. Luke 2:7

So much of God’s plan for history came together on Christmas Eve. At the macro-level of the Roman Empire, Caesar took a census at precisely the right time, likely for reasons of strengthening political control and generating more tax revenue (vv. 1–3). Caesar Augustus, also called Octavian, was the great-nephew of Julius Caesar and governed for 41 years. One result of his imperial edict was that Jesus was born in Bethlehem (not Nazareth), as had been prophesied (Mic. 5:2).

God’s sovereign care was also evident at the micro-level of Mary and Joseph’s young family (Luke 2:4–7). They’d gone to Bethlehem for the census because Joseph was of the line of David. They were probably planning to stay with relatives, but no guestroom was available so they ended up staying where animals were kept. We only know this detail from the single mention of the “manger” or animal feeding trough in which baby Jesus was laid.

Despite all the fulfilled prophecies, the circumstances of Jesus’ birth were surprising and full of incongruities. We need to hear this story with fresh ears. The Messiah had been born...in a barn? The King had come...as the child of a poor couple? “God with us” had arrived in the flesh...and the first witnesses were animals?

**Apply the Word**

Are you attending the Christmas Eve service at your church tonight? If Advent candles are part of your worship tradition, it’s finally time for the “Christ candle” to be lit!

### **Pray with Us**

Dear Jesus, you are the Light of the World. We are awed by your love and humility, as you came to us in the flesh, so that we could become one with you. May you be foremost in our hearts and minds this Christmas Eve.

## BY Brad Baurain

# Our Daily Bread – 12/24/20

# When Peace Breaks Out

 **Read:** [**Luke 2:8–20**](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Luke%202.8%E2%80%9320)

8And there were shepherds living out in the fields nearby, keeping watch over their flocks at night. 9An angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. 10But the angel said to them, “Do not be afraid. I bring you good news that will cause great joy for all the people. 11Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is the Messiah, the Lord. 12This will be a sign to you: You will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger.”

13Suddenly a great company of the heavenly host appeared with the angel, praising God and saying,

14“Glory to God in the highest heaven,  
    and on earth peace to those on whom his favor rests.”

15When the angels had left them and gone into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, “Let’s go to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has told us about.”

16So they hurried off and found Mary and Joseph, and the baby, who was lying in the manger. 17When they had seen him, they spread the word concerning what had been told them about this child, 18and all who heard it were amazed at what the shepherds said to them. 19But Mary treasured up all these things and pondered them in her heart. 20The shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all the things they had heard and seen, which were just as they had been told.

Peace to those on whom his favor rests. [Luke 2:14](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Luke%202.14)

On a cold Christmas Eve in Belgium in 1914, the sound of singing floated from the trenches where soldiers were dug in. Strains of the carol “Silent Night” rang out in German and then in English. Soldiers who earlier in the day had been shooting at each other laid down their weapons and emerged from their trenches to shake hands in the “no man’s land” between them, exchanging Christmas greetings and spontaneous gifts from their rations. The ceasefire continued through the next day as the soldiers talked and laughed and even organized soccer matches together.

The Christmas Truce of 1914 that occurred along World War I’s Western Front offered a brief glimpse of the peace the angels proclaimed on the first Christmas long ago. An angel spoke to terrified shepherds with these reassuring words: “Do not be afraid. I bring you good news that will cause great joy for all the people. Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you” ([Luke 2:10–11](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Luke%202.10%E2%80%9311)). Then a multitude of angels appeared, “praising God and saying, ‘Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace to those on whom his favor rests’” (vv. 13–14).

Jesus is the “Prince of Peace” who saves us from our sins ([Isaiah 9:6](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa%209.6)). Through His sacrifice on the cross He offers forgiveness and peace with God to all who trust in Him.

By:  [James Banks](https://odb.org/author/jamesbanks/)

#### **Reflect & Pray**

How have you experienced the peace Jesus provides? In what practical way can you share His peace with someone today?

Prince of Peace, rule in my heart today. I praise You for Your perfect peace that this world can never take away!

#### **Insight**

In [Luke 2](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Luke%202), we learn that shepherds were the first to hear the announcement of Jesus’ birth (vv. 8–20). Shepherds were considered to be in a low social class, especially those who were in the fields at night (v. 8), and they were often viewed as unclean. Scholars suggest that shepherds were the first to see Jesus for the following reasons. First, the shepherds in the field reflect humans living their regular lives. Second, Jesus came to save everyone, including the lowly and outcast. Finally, it reminds us that Jesus is the messianic Shepherd who came to save the lost.

# God Calling – 12/24/20

# He Is Coming

**Our Lord, Thou art here. Let us feel thy nearness.**

Yes! but remember the first Hail must be that of the Magi in the Bethlehem stable. Not as King and Lord in Heavenly triumph must you first hail Me. But as amongst the lowliest, bereft of earth's pomp like the Magi.

So to the humble the worship of humility -- the Bethlehem Babe -- must be the first Hail.

Then the worship of repentance. As earth's sinner, you stand by Me in the Jordan, baptized of John, worshiping Me the Friend and Servant of sinners.

Dwell much on My Life. Step out beside Me. Share it with Me. Humility, Service, Worship, Sacrifice, Sanctification -- Steps in the Christian Life.

"And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth." John 1:14

# My Utmost for His Highest – 12/25/20

# His Birth and Our New Birth



"Behold, the virgin shall be with child, and bear a Son, and they shall call His name Immanuel," which is translated, "God with us." —[Matthew 1:23](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?version=31&search=Matthew+1%3A23)

**His Birth in History**. “…that Holy One who is to be born will be called the Son of God ([Luke 1:35](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Luke+1:35)). Jesus Christ was born into this world, not from it. He did not emerge out of history; He came into history from the outside. Jesus Christ is not the best human being the human race can boast of— He is a Being for whom the human race can take no credit at all. He is not man becoming God, but God Incarnate— God coming into human flesh from outside it. His life is the highest and the holiest entering through the most humble of doors. Our Lord’s birth was an advent— the appearance of God in human form.

**His Birth in Me**. “My little children, for whom I labor in birth again until Christ is formed in you…” ([Galatians 4:19](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Galatians+4:19)). Just as our Lord came into human history from outside it, He must also come into me from outside. Have I allowed my personal human life to become a “Bethlehem” for the Son of God? I cannot enter the realm of the kingdom of God unless I am born again from above by a birth totally unlike physical birth. “You must be born again” ([John 3:7](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=John+3:7)). This is not a command, but a fact based on the authority of God. The evidence of the new birth is that I yield myself so completely to God that “Christ is formed” in me. And once “Christ is formed” in me, His nature immediately begins to work through me.

**God Evident in the Flesh.** This is what is made so profoundly possible for you and for me through the redemption of man by Jesus Christ.

**WISDOM FROM OSWALD CHAMBERS**

It is an easy thing to argue from precedent because it makes everything simple, but it is a risky thing to do. Give God “elbow room”; let Him come into His universe as He pleases. If we confine God in His working to religious people or to certain ways, we place ourselves on an equality with God.

Baffled to Fight Better, 51 L

# CCEL – 12/25/20

**The kindness and love of God our Saviour toward man appeared.**—[TIT. 3:4.](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Titus.3.html" \l "Titus.3.4)

I have loved thee with an everlasting love.

In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him. Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins.

When the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons.—The Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father) full of grace and truth.—Great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifest in the flesh.

As the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same; that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil.

[Jer. 31:3](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Jer.31.html#Jer.31.3).[I John 4:9,10](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.iJohn.4.html" \l "iJohn.4.9).[Gal. 4:4,5](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Gal.4.html" \l "Gal.4.4). -[John 1:14](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.John.1.html" \l "John.1.14). -[I Tim. 3:16](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.iTim.3.html" \l "iTim.3.16).[Heb. 2:14](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Heb.2.html" \l "Heb.2.14).

“Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel.”

### [Isaiah 7:14](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Isa.7.html" \l "Isa.7.14)

Let us today go down to Bethlehem, and in company with wondering shepherds and adoring Magi, let us see him who was born King of the Jews, for we by faith can claim an interest in him, and can sing, “Unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given.” Jesus is Jehovah incarnate, our Lord and our God, and yet our brother and friend; let us adore and admire. Let us notice at the very first glance his miraculous conception. It was a thing unheard of before, and unparalleled since, that a virgin should conceive and bear a Son. The first promise ran thus, “The seed of the woman,” not the offspring of the man. Since venturous woman led the way in the sin which brought forth Paradise lost, she, and she alone, ushers in the Regainer of Paradise. Our Saviour, although truly man, was as to his human nature the Holy One of God. Let us reverently bow before the holy Child whose innocence restores to manhood its ancient glory; and let us pray that he may be formed in us, the hope of glory. Fail not to note his humble parentage. His mother has been described simply as “a virgin,” not a princess, or prophetess, nor a matron of large estate. True the blood of kings ran in her veins; nor was her mind a weak and untaught one, for she could sing most sweetly a song of praise; but yet how humble her position, how poor the man to whom she stood affianced, and how miserable the accommodation afforded to the new-born King!

Immanuel, God with us in our nature, in our sorrow, in our lifework, in our punishment, in our grave, and now with us, or rather we with him, in resurrection, ascension, triumph, and Second Advent splendour.

# Word Live – 12/25/20

# <https://content.scriptureunion.org.uk/wordlive/>

# Scripture Union – 12/25/20

[**https://scriptureunion.org/encounters/**](https://scriptureunion.org/encounters/)

# Today in the Word – 12/25/20

# Good News of Great Joy

**Read:** [**Luke 2:8–20**](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Luke+2%3a8%e2%80%9320)

8And there were shepherds living out in the fields nearby, keeping watch over their flocks at night. 9An angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. 10But the angel said to them, “Do not be afraid. I bring you good news that will cause great joy for all the people. 11Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is the Messiah, the Lord. 12This will be a sign to you: You will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger.”

13Suddenly a great company of the heavenly host appeared with the angel, praising God and saying,

14“Glory to God in the highest heaven,  
    and on earth peace to those on whom his favor rests.”

15When the angels had left them and gone into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, “Let’s go to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has told us about.”

16So they hurried off and found Mary and Joseph, and the baby, who was lying in the manger. 17When they had seen him, they spread the word concerning what had been told them about this child, 18and all who heard it were amazed at what the shepherds said to them. 19But Mary treasured up all these things and pondered them in her heart. 20The shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all the things they had heard and seen, which were just as they had been told.

In response to the COVID-19 pandemic and the prevailing sense of anxiety that came with it, television actor John Krasinski asked a simple question: “Why has there never been a news show dedicated entirely to good news?” He decided to host an online video show simply titled, SGN or Some Good News focusing on inspirational and positive news stories. To his surprise, the simple, informal show received 71 million views! People were hungry for good news.

I bring you good news that will cause great joy for all the people. Luke 2:10

The shepherds in today’s reading were watching over sheep outside Bethlehem, perhaps tending to the flocks reserved for temple sacrifices. Little did they know that on that ordinary night God would choose them as the first people to receive the news of the Savior’s birth (v. 8).

The message was straightforward (vv. 9–14): The Messiah had been born! This was good news of great joy for everyone! The messenger was a single angel, followed by “a great company of the heavenly host” (v. 13) who burst forth in praise to the Lord. Literally, this phrase is “a multitude of the armies of heaven,” signaling that the invasion of Satan’s territory had begun!

After they recovered from their terror and awe in the presence of the glory of the Lord, the shepherds obediently went and found the child, lying in a manger (vv. 15–16). Then they did what we should all be doing—spread the word (vv. 17–18), praising God for all that had taken place (v. 20). Notice that while the good news is “for all the people,” that is, all nations, including Gentiles (v. 10), the peace announced by the angels is only for those “on whom his [God’s] favor rests” (v. 14). With whom is God pleased? With those who believe on the name of His Son.

**Apply the Word**

Merry Christmas to you and your family from all of us at Today in the Word. As you celebrate the birth of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, know that we are rejoicing in this special day with you.

### **Pray with Us**

Merry Christmas! Our Savior is born! Father, we are overjoyed and humbled by the birth of Jesus. We believe in the name of your Son and we thank you for your undeserved favor and grace.

## BY Brad Baurain

# Our Daily Bread – 12/25/20

# Joy to the World

 **Read:** [**John 3:1–8**](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/John%203.1%E2%80%938)

**Jesus Teaches Nicodemus**

3 Now there was a Pharisee, a man named Nicodemus who was a member of the Jewish ruling council. 2He came to Jesus at night and said, “Rabbi, we know that you are a teacher who has come from God. For no one could perform the signs you are doing if God were not with him.”

3Jesus replied, “Very truly I tell you, no one can see the kingdom of God unless they are born again.[[a](https://classic.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=John+3%3A1%E2%80%938+%2C+13%E2%80%9316&version=NIV#fen-NIV-26124a)]”

4“How can someone be born when they are old?” Nicodemus asked. “Surely they cannot enter a second time into their mother’s womb to be born!”

5Jesus answered, “Very truly I tell you, no one can enter the kingdom of God unless they are born of water and the Spirit. 6Flesh gives birth to flesh, but the Spirit[[b](https://classic.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=John+3%3A1%E2%80%938+%2C+13%E2%80%9316&version=NIV#fen-NIV-26127b)] gives birth to spirit. 7You should not be surprised at my saying, ‘You[[c](https://classic.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=John+3%3A1%E2%80%938+%2C+13%E2%80%9316&version=NIV#fen-NIV-26128c)] must be born again.’ 8The wind blows wherever it pleases. You hear its sound, but you cannot tell where it comes from or where it is going. So it is with everyone born of the Spirit.”[[d](https://classic.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=John+3%3A1%E2%80%938+%2C+13%E2%80%9316&version=NIV#fen-NIV-26129d)]

#### **Footnotes:**

1. [John 3:3](https://classic.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=John+3%3A1%E2%80%938+%2C+13%E2%80%9316&version=NIV#en-NIV-26124) The Greek for again also means from above; also in verse 7.
2. [John 3:6](https://classic.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=John+3%3A1%E2%80%938+%2C+13%E2%80%9316&version=NIV#en-NIV-26127) Or but spirit
3. [John 3:7](https://classic.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=John+3%3A1%E2%80%938+%2C+13%E2%80%9316&version=NIV#en-NIV-26128) The Greek is plural.
4. [John 3:8](https://classic.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=John+3%3A1%E2%80%938+%2C+13%E2%80%9316&version=NIV#en-NIV-26129) The Greek for Spirit is the same as that for wind.

**Read:** [**John 3:**](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/John%203.1%E2%80%938)[**13–16**](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/John%203.13%E2%80%9316)

13No one has ever gone into heaven except the one who came from heaven—the Son of Man.[[a](https://classic.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=John+3%3A1%E2%80%938+%2C+13%E2%80%9316&version=NIV#fen-NIV-26134a)] 14Just as Moses lifted up the snake in the wilderness, so the Son of Man must be lifted up,[[b](https://classic.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=John+3%3A1%E2%80%938+%2C+13%E2%80%9316&version=NIV#fen-NIV-26135b)] 15that everyone who believes may have eternal life in him.”[[c](https://classic.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=John+3%3A1%E2%80%938+%2C+13%E2%80%9316&version=NIV#fen-NIV-26136c)]

16For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.

#### **Footnotes:**

1. [John 3:13](https://classic.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=John+3%3A1%E2%80%938+%2C+13%E2%80%9316&version=NIV#en-NIV-26134) Some manuscripts Man, who is in heaven
2. [John 3:14](https://classic.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=John+3%3A1%E2%80%938+%2C+13%E2%80%9316&version=NIV#en-NIV-26135) The Greek for lifted up also means exalted.
3. [John 3:15](https://classic.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=John+3%3A1%E2%80%938+%2C+13%E2%80%9316&version=NIV#en-NIV-26136) Some interpreters end the quotation with verse 21.

God so loved the world. [John 3:16](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/John%203.16)

Every Christmas we decorate our home with nativity scenes from around the world. We have a German nativity pyramid, a manger scene fashioned out of olive wood from Bethlehem, and a brightly colored Mexican folk version. Our family favorite is a whimsical entry from Africa. Instead of the more traditional sheep and camels, a hippopotamus gazes contently at the baby Jesus.

The unique cultural perspective brought to life in these nativity scenes warms my heart as I ponder each beautiful reminder that Jesus’ birth was not just for one nation or culture. It’s good news for the whole earth, a reason for people from every country and ethnicity to rejoice.

The little baby depicted in each of our nativity scenes revealed this truth of God’s heart for the entire world. As John wrote in relation to Christ’s conversation with an inquisitive Pharisee named Nicodemus, “For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life” ([John 3:16](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/John%203.16)).

The gift of Jesus is good news for everyone. No matter where on earth you call home, Jesus’ birth is God’s offer of love and peace to you. And all who find new life in Christ, “from every tribe and language and people and nation” will one day celebrate God’s glory forever and ever ([Revelation 5:9](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rev%205.9)).

By:  [Lisa M. Samra](https://odb.org/author/lisasamra/)

#### **Reflect & Pray**

In what unique ways do you celebrate the birth of Jesus? How might the reminder of God’s love for the whole world bring joy this Christmas season?

Father, thank You for providing salvation through the gift of Your Son.

#### **Insight**

Nicodemus is first mentioned in [John 3:1](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/John%203.1). He was a Pharisee and a member of the Sanhedrin, the highest Jewish civil and judicial authority. The Sanhedrin was led by the high priest and consisted of seventy members: “the chief priests, the elders and the teachers of the law” ([Mark 14:53](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Mark%2014.53)). Nicodemus is mentioned again in [John 7:45–52](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/John%207.45%E2%80%9352) and finally in [John 19:38–42](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/John%2019.38%E2%80%9342). Joseph of Arimathea, a rich man and another prominent member of the council, asked Pilate for Jesus’ body to be taken down from the cross. Nicodemus and Joseph embalmed His body and buried Him in a new tomb, which belonged to Joseph ([Matthew 27:57–60](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Matt%2027.57%E2%80%9360); [Mark 15:43](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Mark%2015.43); [Luke 23:50–53](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Luke%2023.50%E2%80%9353)).

# God Calling – 12/25/20

# Babe of Bethlehem

Kneel before the Babe of Bethlehem. Accept the truth that the Kingdom of Heaven is for the lowly, the simple.

Bring to Me, the Christ-child, your gifts, truly the gifts of earth's wisest.

The Gold -- your money.

Frankincense -- the adoration of a consecrated life.

Myrrh -- your sharing in My sorrows and those of the world.

"And they presented unto Him gifts: gold, frankincense and myrrh."

"Though the Lord be high, yet hath he respect unto the lowly: but the proud he knoweth afar off." Psalm 138:6

# My Utmost for His Highest – 12/26/20

# “Walk in the Light”



If we walk in the light as He is in the light…the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin. —[1 John 1:7](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?version=31&search=1+John+1%3A7)

To mistake freedom from sin only on the conscious level of our lives for complete deliverance from sin by the atonement through the Cross of Christ is a great error. No one fully knows what sin is until he is born again. Sin is what Jesus Christ faced at Calvary. The evidence that I have been delivered from sin is that I know the real nature of sin in me. For a person to really know what sin is requires the full work and deep touch of the atonement of Jesus Christ, that is, the imparting of His absolute perfection.

The Holy Spirit applies or administers the work of the atonement to us in the deep unconscious realm as well as in the conscious realm. And it is not until we truly perceive the unrivaled power of the Spirit in us that we understand the meaning of [1 John 1:7](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=1+John+1:7) , which says, “…the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin.” This verse does not refer only to conscious sin, but also to the tremendously profound understanding of sin which only the Holy Spirit in me can accomplish.

I must “walk in the light as He is in the light…”— not in the light of my own conscience, but in God’s light. If I will walk there, with nothing held back or hidden, then this amazing truth is revealed to me: “…the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses [me] from all sin” so that God Almighty can see nothing to rebuke in me. On the conscious level it produces a keen, sorrowful knowledge of what sin really is. The love of God working in me causes me to hate, with the Holy Spirit’s hatred for sin, anything that is not in keeping with God’s holiness. To “walk in the light” means that everything that is of the darkness actually drives me closer to the center of the light.

**WISDOM FROM OSWALD CHAMBERS**

The great word of Jesus to His disciples is Abandon. When God has brought us into the relationship of disciples, we have to venture on His word; trust entirely to Him and watch that when He brings us to the venture, we take it.

Studies in the Sermon on the Mount

# CCEL – 12/26/20

**Be ye stedfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord.**—[I COR. 15:58.](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.iCor.15.html" \l "iCor.15.58)

Ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord.—As ye have . . . received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in him: rooted and built up in him, and stablished in the faith, as ye have been taught, abounding therein with thanksgiving.—He that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved.—That on the good ground are they, which in an honest and good heart, having heard the word, keep it, and bring forth fruit with patience.

By faith ye stand.

I must work the works of him that sent me, while it is day: the night cometh, when no man can work.

He that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting. And let us not be weary in well doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not. As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith.

[I Cor. 15:58](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.iCor.15.html#iCor.15.58). -[Col. 2:6,7](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Col.2.html" \l "Col.2.6). -[Matt. 24:13](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Matt.24.html" \l "Matt.24.13). -[Luke 8:15](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Luke.8.html" \l "Luke.8.15).[II Cor. 1:24](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.iiCor.1.html" \l "iiCor.1.24).[John 9:4](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.John.9.html" \l "John.9.4).[Gal. 6:8-10](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Gal.6.html" \l "Gal.6.8).

“The last Adam.” [1 Corinthians 15:45](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.iCor.15.html" \l "iCor.15.45)

Jesus is the federal head of his elect. As in Adam, every heir of flesh and blood has a personal interest, because he is the covenant head and representative of the race as considered under the law of works; so under the law of grace, every redeemed soul is one with the Lord from heaven, since he is the Second Adam, the Sponsor and Substitute of the elect in the new covenant of love. The apostle Paul declares that Levi was in the loins of Abraham when Melchizedek met him: it is a certain truth that the believer was in the loins of Jesus Christ, the Mediator, when in old eternity the covenant settlements of grace were decreed, ratified, and made sure forever. Thus, whatever Christ hath done, he hath wrought for the whole body of his Church. We were crucified in him and buried with him (read [Col. 2:10-13](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Col.2.html" \l "Col.2.10)), and to make it still more wonderful, we are risen with him and even ascended with him to the seats on high ([Eph. 2:6](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Eph.2.html" \l "Eph.2.6)). It is thus that the Church has fulfilled the law, and is “accepted in the beloved.” It is thus that she is regarded with complacency by the just Jehovah, for he views her in Jesus, and does not look upon her as separate from her covenant head. As the Anointed Redeemer of Israel, Christ Jesus has nothing distinct from his Church, but all that he has he holds for her. Adam’s righteousness was ours so long as he maintained it, and his sin was ours the moment that he committed it; and in the same manner, all that the Second Adam is or does, is ours as well as his, seeing that he is our representative. Here is the foundation of the covenant of grace. This gracious system of representation and substitution, which moved Justin Martyr to cry out, “O blessed change, O sweet permutation!” this is the very groundwork of the gospel of our salvation, and is to be received with strong faith and rapturous joy.

# Word Live – 12/26/20

# <https://content.scriptureunion.org.uk/wordlive/>

# Scripture Union – 12/26/20

[**https://scriptureunion.org/encounters/**](https://scriptureunion.org/encounters/)

# Today in the Word – 12/26/20

# The King Has Come!

**Read:** [**Matthew 2:1–12**](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Matthew+2%3a1%e2%80%9312)

### **The Magi Visit the Messiah**

2 After Jesus was born in Bethlehem in Judea, during the time of King Herod, Magi[[a](https://classic.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Matthew+2%3a1%e2%80%9312#fen-NIV-23171a)] from the east came to Jerusalem 2and asked, “Where is the one who has been born king of the Jews? We saw his star when it rose and have come to worship him.”

3When King Herod heard this he was disturbed, and all Jerusalem with him. 4When he had called together all the people’s chief priests and teachers of the law, he asked them where the Messiah was to be born. 5“In Bethlehem in Judea,” they replied, “for this is what the prophet has written:

6“‘But you, Bethlehem, in the land of Judah,  
    are by no means least among the rulers of Judah;  
for out of you will come a ruler  
    who will shepherd my people Israel.’[[b](https://classic.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Matthew+2%3a1%e2%80%9312#fen-NIV-23176b)]”

7Then Herod called the Magi secretly and found out from them the exact time the star had appeared. 8He sent them to Bethlehem and said, “Go and search carefully for the child. As soon as you find him, report to me, so that I too may go and worship him.”

9After they had heard the king, they went on their way, and the star they had seen when it rose went ahead of them until it stopped over the place where the child was. 10When they saw the star, they were overjoyed. 11On coming to the house, they saw the child with his mother Mary, and they bowed down and worshiped him. Then they opened their treasures and presented him with gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh. 12And having been warned in a dream not to go back to Herod, they returned to their country by another route.

#### **Footnotes:**

1. [Matthew 2:1](https://classic.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Matthew+2%3a1%e2%80%9312#en-NIV-23171) Traditionally wise men
2. [Matthew 2:6](https://classic.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Matthew+2%3a1%e2%80%9312#en-NIV-23176) Micah 5:2,4

What about this star that made it so special? The star of Bethlehem was special because it led the magi to Mary and Joseph and Jesus. Bible scholar Colin R. Nicholl researched astronomy to make his case that this star was actually a comet. His book The Great Christ Comet argues that this interpretation further supports the historicity of the Gospels.

Out of you will come a ruler who will shepherd my people Israel. Matthew 2:6

The magi mentioned in this second chapter of Matthew were likely Persian astronomers and astrologers who were well-trained to observe and track these types of celestial phenomena. Months after Jesus’ birth, they followed the star to the right house (v. 9). They may have known Messianic prophecies via Jewish exiles in Babylon (such as Daniel), or even from the days of Balaam (see Num. 24:17). How many of them were there? We don’t know, although three is the traditional answer due to the specific mention of gifts (Matt. 2:11). What motivated them? Their stated desire was to worship the newborn King (v. 2).

Their arrival would certainly have captured the attention of everyone in Jerusalem! Imagine a caravan of distinguished foreign visitors arriving unannounced and telling everyone they’re in search of a new king. No wonder Herod was fearful. This event substantiated at least five features of the Christmas story. First, it confirmed Bethlehem as the prophesied birthplace of the Messiah (vv. 5–6). Second, it proved again that God would control events (v. 12). Third, it revealed that human authorities would lie and oppose Jesus (v. 8). Fourth, the star provided another miraculous sign of the Incarnation. Fifth and finally, the magi’s visit demonstrated that Christmas is for all, the Gentiles as well as the Jewish people. Jesus is King of all nations.

**Apply the Word**

Tonight, step out in the darkness of the evening (even if it is chilly) and look to the sky. Observe the stars and marvel at the handiwork of God’s creation, which remains completely under His control today.

### **Pray with Us**

God of all miracles, you love us and know each of us intimately. Thank you for sending your Son, so each of us can know you personally.

## BY Brad Baurain

# Our Daily Bread – 12/26/20

# Who Needs Me?

 **Read:** [**1 Kings 19:9–12**](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1%20Kings%2019.9%E2%80%9312)

9There he went into a cave and spent the night.

### The Lord Appears to Elijah

And the word of the Lord came to him: “What are you doing here, Elijah?”

10He replied, “I have been very zealous for the Lord God Almighty. The Israelites have rejected your covenant, torn down your altars, and put your prophets to death with the sword. I am the only one left, and now they are trying to kill me too.”

11The Lord said, “Go out and stand on the mountain in the presence of the Lord, for the Lord is about to pass by.”

Then a great and powerful wind tore the mountains apart and shattered the rocks before the Lord, but the Lord was not in the wind. After the wind there was an earthquake, but the Lord was not in the earthquake. 12After the earthquake came a fire, but the Lord was not in the fire. And after the fire came a gentle whisper.

**Read:** [**1 Kings 19:**](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1%20Kings%2019.9%E2%80%9312)[**15–18**](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1%20Kings%2019.15%E2%80%9318)

15The Lord said to him, “Go back the way you came, and go to the Desert of Damascus. When you get there, anoint Hazael king over Aram. 16Also, anoint Jehu son of Nimshi king over Israel, and anoint Elisha son of Shaphat from Abel Meholah to succeed you as prophet. 17Jehu will put to death any who escape the sword of Hazael, and Elisha will put to death any who escape the sword of Jehu. 18Yet I reserve seven thousand in Israel—all whose knees have not bowed down to Baal and whose mouths have not kissed him.”

When you get there, anoint Hazael king over Aram. [1 Kings 19:15](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1%20Kings%2019.15)

While on a red-eye flight to Washington, DC, opinion writer Arthur Brooks overheard an elderly woman whisper to her husband, “It’s not true that no one needs you anymore.” The man murmured something about wishing he were dead, and his wife replied, “Oh, stop saying that.” When the flight ended, Brooks turned around and immediately recognized the man. He was a world-famous hero. Other passengers shook his hand, and the pilot thanked him for the courage he displayed decades ago. How had this giant sunk into despair?

The prophet Elijah bravely and single-handedly defeated 450 prophets of Baal—or so he thought ([1 Kings 18](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1%20Kings%2018)). Yet he hadn’t really done it alone; God was there all along! But later, feeling all alone, he asked God to take his life.

God lifted Elijah’s spirits by bringing him into His presence and giving him new people to serve. He must go and “anoint Hazael king over Aram,” Jehu “king over Israel,” and Elisha “to succeed you as prophet” (19:15–16). Invigorated with renewed purpose, Elijah found and mentored his successor.

Your great victories may lie in the rearview mirror. You may feel your life has peaked, or that it never did. No matter. Look around. The battles may seem smaller, the stakes less profound, but there are still others who need you. Serve them well for Jesus’ sake, and it will count. They’re your purpose—the reason you’re still here.

By:  [Mike Wittmer](https://odb.org/author/mwittmer/)

#### **Reflect & Pray**

Who can you serve today for Christ? Why is it so vital for you to reach out to others with God’s love?

Holy Spirit, open my eyes to those I can serve for Jesus’ sake.

#### **Insight**

When God tells Elijah that He’s reserved seven thousand people in Israel who remain loyal to Him ([1 Kings 19:18](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1%20Kings%2019.18)), He corrects Elijah’s misunderstanding that he’s the only one left who truly worships God (18:22; 19:10, 14). Some scholars view seven thousand as symbolizing fullness. In spite of the opposition of the wicked Israelite king Ahab and his wife Jezebel, God had preserved a godly remnant. The notion of a remnant preserved by God is seen with Noah’s family ([Genesis 6–9](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Gen%206%E2%80%939)), with the survivors of military sieges ([2 Kings 19:4](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2%20Kings%2019.4), [30–31](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2%20Kings%2019.30%E2%80%9331)), and within the exile ([Isaiah 10:20–22](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa%2010.20%E2%80%9322); [11:16](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isaiah%2011.16); [46:3](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isaiah%2046.3)). For the apostle Paul, Jewish believers in Jesus now constitute a faithful remnant that fulfills the claim of [1 Kings 19:18](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1%20Kings%2019.18) ([Romans 11:2–5](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom%2011.2%E2%80%935)).

# God Calling – 12/26/20

# Health and Wealth

Be not afraid, health and wealth are coming to you both. My wealth which is sufficiency for your needs, and for My work you long to do.

Money, as some call wealth, to hoard, to display, you know is not for My Disciples.

Journey through this world simply seeking the means to do My Will and work. Never keep anything you are not using. Remember all I give you will be Mine, only given to you to use. Could you think of Me hoarding My Treasures? You must never do it. Rely on Me.

To store for the future is to fear and to doubt me. Check every doubt of Me at once. Live in the Joy of My constant Presence. Yield every moment to Me. Perform every task, however humble, as at My gentle bidding, and for Me, for love of Me. So live, so love, so work.

You are the Apostles of the Little Services.

"Trust not in oppression, and become not vain in robbery: if riches increase, set your heart upon them." Psalm 62:10

# My Utmost for His Highest – 12/27/20

# Where the Battle is Won or Lost

# Where the Battle is Won or Lost

"If you will return, O Israel," says the Lord… —[Jeremiah 4:1](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?version=31&search=Jeremiah+4%3A1)

Our battles are first won or lost in the secret places of our will in God’s presence, never in full view of the world. The Spirit of God seizes me and I am compelled to get alone with God and fight the battle before Him. Until I do this, I will lose every time. The battle may take one minute or one year, but that will depend on me, not God. However long it takes, I must wrestle with it alone before God, and I must resolve to go through the hell of renunciation or rejection before Him. Nothing has any power over someone who has fought the battle before God and won there.

I should never say, “I will wait until I get into difficult circumstances and then I’ll put God to the test.” Trying to do that will not work. I must first get the issue settled between God and myself in the secret places of my soul, where no one else can interfere. Then I can go ahead, knowing with certainty that the battle is won. Lose it there, and calamity, disaster, and defeat before the world are as sure as the laws of God. The reason the battle is lost is that I fight it first in the external world. Get alone with God, do battle before Him, and settle the matter once and for all.

In dealing with other people, our stance should always be to drive them toward making a decision of their will. That is how surrendering to God begins. Not often, but every once in a while, God brings us to a major turning point— a great crossroads in our life. From that point we either go toward a more and more slow, lazy, and useless Christian life, or we become more and more on fire, giving our utmost for His highest— our best for His glory.

**WISDOM FROM OSWALD CHAMBERS**

Re-state to yourself what you believe, then do away with as much of it as possible, and get back to the bedrock of the Cross of Christ.

My Utmost for His Highest, November 25, 848 R

# CCEL – 12/27/20

**We look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal.**—[II COR. 4:18.](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.iiCor.4.html" \l "iiCor.4.18)

Here have we no continuing city.—Ye have in heaven a better and an enduring substance.

Fear not, little flock; for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom.

Now for a season, if need be, ye are in heaviness through manifold temptations.—There the wicked cease from troubling; and there the weary be at rest.

We that are in this tabernacle do groan, being burdened.—God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away.

The sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us.—Our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory.

[Heb. 13:14](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Heb.13.html" \l "Heb.13.14). -[Heb. 10:34](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Heb.10.html" \l "Heb.10.34).[Luke 12:32](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Luke.12.html" \l "Luke.12.32).[I Pet. 1:6](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.iPet.1.html" \l "iPet.1.6). -[Job 3:17](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Job.3.html#Job.3.17).[II Cor. 5:4](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.iiCor.5.html" \l "iiCor.5.4). -[Rev. 21:4](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Rev.21.html#Rev.21.4).[Rom. 8:18](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Rom.8.html" \l "Rom.8.18). -[II Cor. 4:17](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.iiCor.4.html" \l "iiCor.4.17).

“Can the rush grow up without mire?” **[Job 8:11](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Job.8.html" \l "Job.8.11)**

The rush is spongy and hollow, and even so is a hypocrite; there is no substance or stability in him. It is shaken to and fro in every wind just as formalists yield to every influence; for this reason the rush is not broken by the tempest, neither are hypocrites troubled with persecution. I would not willingly be a deceiver or be deceived; perhaps the text for this day may help me to try myself whether I be a hypocrite or no. The rush by nature lives in water, and owes its very existence to the mire and moisture wherein it has taken root; let the mire become dry, and the rush withers very quickly. Its greenness is absolutely dependent upon circumstances, a present abundance of water makes it flourish, and a drought destroys it at once. Is this my case? Do I only serve God when I am in good company, or when religion is profitable and respectable? Do I love the Lord only when temporal comforts are received from his hands? If so I am a base hypocrite, and like the withering rush, I shall perish when death deprives me of outward joys. But can I honestly assert that when bodily comforts have been few, and my surroundings have been rather adverse to grace than at all helpful to it, I have still held fast my integrity? Then have I hope that there is genuine vital godliness in me. The rush cannot grow without mire, but plants of the Lord’s right hand planting can and do flourish even in the year of drought. A godly man often grows best when his worldly circumstances decay. He who follows Christ for his bag is a Judas; they who follow for loaves and fishes are children of the devil; but they who attend him out of love to himself are his own beloved ones. Lord, let me find my life in thee, and not in the mire of this world’s favour or gain.

# Word Live – 12/27/20

# <https://content.scriptureunion.org.uk/wordlive/>

# Scripture Union – 12/27/20

[**https://scriptureunion.org/encounters/**](https://scriptureunion.org/encounters/)

# Today in the Word – 12/27/20

# Hope Fulfilled

**Read:** [**Luke 2:22–35**](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Luke+2%3a22%e2%80%9335)

### **Jesus Presented in the Temple**

22When the time came for the purification rites required by the Law of Moses, Joseph and Mary took him to Jerusalem to present him to the Lord 23(as it is written in the Law of the Lord, “Every firstborn male is to be consecrated to the Lord”[[a](https://classic.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Luke+2%3a22%e2%80%9335#fen-NIV-24997a)]), 24and to offer a sacrifice in keeping with what is said in the Law of the Lord: “a pair of doves or two young pigeons.”[[b](https://classic.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Luke+2%3a22%e2%80%9335#fen-NIV-24998b)]

25Now there was a man in Jerusalem called Simeon, who was righteous and devout. He was waiting for the consolation of Israel, and the Holy Spirit was on him. 26It had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not die before he had seen the Lord’s Messiah. 27Moved by the Spirit, he went into the temple courts. When the parents brought in the child Jesus to do for him what the custom of the Law required, 28Simeon took him in his arms and praised God, saying:

29“Sovereign Lord, as you have promised,  
    you may now dismiss[[c](https://classic.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Luke+2%3a22%e2%80%9335#fen-NIV-25003c)] your servant in peace.  
30For my eyes have seen your salvation,  
31    which you have prepared in the sight of all nations:  
32a light for revelation to the Gentiles,  
    and the glory of your people Israel.”

33The child’s father and mother marveled at what was said about him. 34Then Simeon blessed them and said to Mary, his mother: “This child is destined to cause the falling and rising of many in Israel, and to be a sign that will be spoken against, 35so that the thoughts of many hearts will be revealed. And a sword will pierce your own soul too.”

#### **Footnotes:**

1. [Luke 2:23](https://classic.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Luke+2%3a22%e2%80%9335#en-NIV-24997) Exodus 13:2,12
2. [Luke 2:24](https://classic.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Luke+2%3a22%e2%80%9335#en-NIV-24998) Lev. 12:8
3. [Luke 2:29](https://classic.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Luke+2%3a22%e2%80%9335#en-NIV-25003) Or promised, / now dismiss

Our hope is in the Lord! That truth is so important, we should shout it from the rooftops. Pastor and author David Platt explained why we’re compelled to spread the gospel of Christ: “[If] Jesus did rise from the dead if Jesus alone paid the price for man’s sin, and if Jesus alone conquered sin, death, and the grave, then going around the world and telling people about Jesus is the only thing that makes sense.”

My eyes have seen your salvation. Luke 2:30

This is the true spirit of Christmas, as we see in Simeon’s pronouncements. Forty days after the birth of Jesus, Mary and Joseph took her purification offering to the temple (v. 22). They also planned to dedicate their firstborn son to the Lord (v. 23), as the Law prescribed (Ex. 13:2). There they encountered Simeon, a devout worshiper who was “waiting for the consolation of Israel” (v. 25), that is, the Messiah. The Holy Spirit had promised he’d see the Messiah with his own eyes, during his lifetime (v. 26). Mary and Joseph might have been a bit shocked by the old man who took their baby in his arms, but they could sense God at work.

Simeon’s first pronouncement focused on rejoicing in hope fulfilled (vv. 29–32). “My eyes have seen your salvation”—the Messiah had finally come! God had kept His promise to Simeon and to generation upon generation of Israelites. And not only them, for the Messiah is for “all nations,” including Gentiles. The Redeemer had arrived in the person of Jesus Christ!

Simeon’s second pronouncement was to Mary (vv. 34–35). These words are a bit more cryptic and indicate that the Messiah will be opposed and hearts will be revealed in how people respond to Him. Mary herself would experience deep sorrow.

**Apply the Word**

Spend some extra time today praying for your unsaved friends and family members. Ask God to give you open doors for faith conversations and enable you to live the truth of the gospel before them.

### **Pray with Us**

Father, we all have friends or loved ones who do not yet know you. We ask you to pursue and win them as you have pursued and won us. Show us how to be your hands and feet in this work.

## BY Brad Baurain

# Our Daily Bread – 12/27/20

# A Song in the Night

 **Read:** [**Psalm 103:1–14**](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps%20103.1%E2%80%9314)

#### **Of David.**

1Praise the Lord, my soul;  
    all my inmost being, praise his holy name.  
2Praise the Lord, my soul,  
    and forget not all his benefits—  
3who forgives all your sins  
    and heals all your diseases,  
4who redeems your life from the pit  
    and crowns you with love and compassion,  
5who satisfies your desires with good things  
    so that your youth is renewed like the eagle’s.

6The Lord works righteousness  
    and justice for all the oppressed.

7He made known his ways to Moses,  
    his deeds to the people of Israel:  
8The Lord is compassionate and gracious,  
    slow to anger, abounding in love.  
9He will not always accuse,  
    nor will he harbor his anger forever;  
10he does not treat us as our sins deserve  
    or repay us according to our iniquities.  
11For as high as the heavens are above the earth,  
    so great is his love for those who fear him;  
12as far as the east is from the west,  
    so far has he removed our transgressions from us.

13As a father has compassion on his children,  
    so the Lord has compassion on those who fear him;  
14for he knows how we are formed,  
    he remembers that we are dust.

The Lord is compassionate and gracious, slow to anger, abounding in love. [Psalm 103:8](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps%20103.8)

The sun had long set when our electrical power suddenly went out. I was at home with our two younger children, and this was their first time experiencing a power outage. After verifying that the utility company knew about the outage, I located some candles, and the kids and I huddled together in the kitchen around the flickering flames. They seemed nervous and unsettled, so we began to sing. Soon the concerned looks on their faces were replaced with smiles. Sometimes in our darkest moments we need a song.

[Psalm 103](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps%20103) may be one of the psalms prayed or sung after the people of God had returned from exile to a homeland that had been laid waste. In a moment of crisis, they needed to sing. But not just any song, they needed to sing about who God is and what He does. [Psalm 103](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps%20103) also helps us remember that He’s compassionate, merciful, patient, and full of faithful love (v. 8). And in case we wonder if the judgment for our sin still hangs over our heads, the psalm announces that God isn’t angry, He has forgiven, and He feels compassion. These are good things to sing about during the dark nights of our lives.

Maybe that’s where you find yourself—in a dark and difficult place, wondering if God really is good, questioning His love for you. If so, pray and sing to the One who abounds in love!

By:  [Glenn Packiam](https://odb.org/author/glennpackiam/)

#### **Reflect & Pray**

How might God’s saving acts in Jesus give you a better picture of what He’s like? How does He view you?

Dear Jesus, help me to see the love of God revealed in Your life, death, and resurrection. Lift up my weary head that I might sing of Your goodness and faithfulness.

#### **Insight**

In [Psalm 103](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps%20103), David praises God and tells readers to remember “all his benefits” (v. 2), which are both physical and spiritual, involving the forgiveness of sin and the healing of diseases (v. 3). David uses imagery to explain these benefits.

One image of a physical benefit is seen in the phrase “so that your youth is renewed like the eagle’s” (v. 5). This is appropriate because the eagle is a symbol of vitality and strength. Some interpreters suggest this expression could refer to molting, where the eagle loses its feathers and grows new ones, so their youth is, in a sense, renewed.

An example of the spiritual benefit is explained through the images of dust and grass (vv. 14–16). David compares man’s temporary life to a flower that flourishes for a time but is then blown away by the wind in contrast to God’s everlasting love (v. 17).

# God Calling – 12/27/20

# Glorious Work

I have stripped you of much, that it should be truly a life of well-being. Build up stone by stone upon a firm foundation, and that Rock is your Master -- that Rock is Christ.

A life of discipline and a joyous fulfillment is to be yours . . . . Never lose sight of the glorious work to which you have been called.

Let no riches, no ease entice you from the path of miracle-working with Me upon which your feet are set. Love and Laugh. Trust and pray. Ride on now in a loving humility to victory.

"Riches profit not in the day of wrath: but righteousness delivereth from death." Proverbs 11:4

# My Utmost for His Highest – 12/28/20

# Continuous Conversion



…unless you are converted and become as little children, you will by no means enter the kingdom of heaven. —[Matthew 18:3](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?version=31&search=Matthew+18%3A3)

These words of our Lord refer to our initial conversion, but we should continue to turn to God as children, being continuously converted every day of our lives. If we trust in our own abilities, instead of God’s, we produce consequences for which God will hold us responsible. When God through His sovereignty brings us into new situations, we should immediately make sure that our natural life submits to the spiritual, obeying the orders of the Spirit of God. Just because we have responded properly in the past is no guarantee that we will do so again. The response of the natural to the spiritual should be continuous conversion, but this is where we so often refuse to be obedient. No matter what our situation is, the Spirit of God remains unchanged and His salvation unaltered. But we must “put on the new man…” ([Ephesians 4:24](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Ephesians+4:24)). God holds us accountable every time we refuse to convert ourselves, and He sees our refusal as willful disobedience. Our natural life must not rule— God must rule in us.

To refuse to be continuously converted puts a stumbling block in the growth of our spiritual life. There are areas of self-will in our lives where our pride pours contempt on the throne of God and says, “I won’t submit.” We deify our independence and self-will and call them by the wrong name. What God sees as stubborn weakness, we call strength. There are whole areas of our lives that have not yet been brought into submission, and this can only be done by this continuous conversion. Slowly but surely we can claim the whole territory for the Spirit of God.

**WISDOM FROM OSWALD CHAMBERS**

The message of the prophets is that although they have forsaken God, it has not altered God. The Apostle Paul emphasizes the same truth, that God remains God even when we are unfaithful (see 2 Timothy 2:13). Never interpret God as changing with our changes. He never does; there is no variableness in Him.

Notes on Ezekiel, 1477 L

# CCEL – 12/28/20

**Thy sins be forgiven thee.**—[MARK 2:5.](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Mark.2.html" \l "Mark.2.5)

I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more.—Who can forgive sins but God only?

I, even I, am he that blotteth out thy transgressions for mine own sake, and will not remember thy sins.—Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered. Blessed is the man unto whom the Lordimputeth not iniquity.—Who is a God like unto thee, that pardoneth iniquity?

God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you.—The blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin. If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

As far as the east is from the west, so far hath he removed our transgressions from us.—Sin shall not have dominion over you: for ye are not under the law, but under grace. Being then made free from sin, ye became the servants of righteousness.

[Jer. 31:34](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Jer.31.html" \l "Jer.31.34). -[Mark 2.7](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Mark.2.html" \l "Mark.2.7).[Isa. 43:25](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Isa.43.html" \l "Isa.43.25). -[Psa. 32:1,2](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Ps.32.html" \l "Ps.32.1). -[Mic. 7:18](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Mic.7.html" \l "Mic.7.18).[Eph. 4:32](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Eph.4.html" \l "Eph.4.32). -[I John 1:7-9](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.iJohn.1.html" \l "iJohn.1.7).[Psa. 103:12](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Ps.103.html" \l "Ps.103.12). -[Rom. 6:14](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Rom.6.html" \l "Rom.6.14),[18](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Rom.6.html" \l "Rom.6.18).

“The life which I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God.”

### **[Galatians 2:20](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Gal.2.html" \l "Gal.2.20)**

When the Lord in mercy passed by and saw us in our blood, he first of all said, “Live;” and this he did first, because life is one of the absolutely essential things in spiritual matters, and until it be bestowed we are incapable of partaking in the things of the kingdom. Now the life which grace confers upon the saints at the moment of their quickening is none other than the life of Christ, which, like the sap from the stem, runs into us, the branches, and establishes a living connection between our souls and Jesus. Faith is the grace which perceives this union, having proceeded from it as its firstfruit. It is the neck which joins the body of the Church to its all-glorious Head.

“Oh Faith! thou bond of union with the Lord,

Is not this office thine? and thy fit name,

In the economy of gospel types,

And symbols apposite—the Church’s neck;

Identifying her in will and work

With him ascended?”

Faith lays hold upon the Lord Jesus with a firm and determined grasp. She knows his excellence and worth, and no temptation can induce her to repose her trust elsewhere; and Christ Jesus is so delighted with this heavenly grace, that he never ceases to strengthen and sustain her by the loving embrace and all-sufficient support of his eternal arms. Here, then, is established a living, sensible, and delightful union which casts forth streams of love, confidence, sympathy, complacency, and joy, whereof both the bride and bridegroom love to drink. When the soul can evidently perceive this oneness between itself and Christ, the pulse may be felt as beating for both, and the one blood as flowing through the veins of each. Then is the heart as near heaven as it can be on earth, and is prepared for the enjoyment of the most sublime and spiritual kind of fellowship.

# Word Live – 12/28/20

# <https://content.scriptureunion.org.uk/wordlive/>

# Scripture Union – 12/28/20

[**https://scriptureunion.org/encounters/**](https://scriptureunion.org/encounters/)

# Today in the Word – 12/28/20

# The Supremacy of Christ

**Read:** [**Colossians 1:15–20**](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Colossians+1%3a15%e2%80%9320)

### **The Supremacy of the Son of God**

15The Son is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. 16For in him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things have been created through him and for him. 17He is before all things, and in him all things hold together. 18And he is the head of the body, the church; he is the beginning and the firstborn from among the dead, so that in everything he might have the supremacy. 19For God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in him, 20and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether things on earth or things in heaven, by making peace through his blood, shed on the cross.

When live sports shut down earlier this year due to COVID-19, ESPN aired a documentary entitled The Last Dance. It focused on Michael Jordan who led the Chicago Bulls to six NBA titles. The storyline declared Jordan to be the GOAT (Greatest of All-Time), among basketball players. While humans can claim to be the greatest at some things, Jesus Christ is the greatest of absolutely everything (v. 18)! The season of Advent tells the story not just of a baby in a manger, but the supremacy of Christ, the Second Person of the Trinity, now incarnated or made visible as a human being (v. 15). We celebrate that the Greatest of All became one of us!

He is before all things, and in him all things hold together. Colossians 1:17

In his letter to the Colossians, Paul affirmed that Christ is “firstborn” or supreme over creation (vv. 15–17). All things were created through Him, including the natural world, human beings, and the supernatural realm (angels and demons). All things were also created for Him, meaning that they serve His purposes and bring Him glory. Finally, all things continue to be dependent on Him, that is, they exist or “hold together” because of Him (v. 17).

Christ is supreme in redemption (vv. 18–20). He is the “head of the body, the church,” the company of the redeemed (v. 18). He was the first to be raised from the dead with a glorified body—in time, we will follow. His shed blood paid the price for our sin and made our peace with God. By His Son’s substitutionary atonement, God reconciled all things to Himself. The only way God’s perfectly just requirements could be met was through His own perfect love in the Person of His Son.

**Apply the Word**

The first line of the Lord’s Prayer is for God’s will to be done on earth as it is in heaven. Similarly, we can pray for Christ to have the first place in our own lives and on earth, just as He already does in heaven (Matt. 6:9; Phil. 2:9–11).

### **Pray with Us**

Lord Jesus, following your instruction on how to pray, we ask that your will be done on earth as it is in heaven, specifically in our lives and hearts. Align our will to yours so that we may desire what you desire.

## BY Brad Baurain

# Our Daily Bread – 12/28/20

# Rebuilding the Ruins

 **Read:** [**Jeremiah 33:6–11**](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Jer%2033.6%E2%80%9311)

6“‘Nevertheless, I will bring health and healing to it; I will heal my people and will let them enjoy abundant peace and security. 7I will bring Judah and Israel back from captivity[[a](https://classic.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Jeremiah+33%3A6%E2%80%9311&version=NIV#fen-NIV-19783a)] and will rebuild them as they were before. 8I will cleanse them from all the sin they have committed against me and will forgive all their sins of rebellion against me. 9Then this city will bring me renown, joy, praise and honor before all nations on earth that hear of all the good things I do for it; and they will be in awe and will tremble at the abundant prosperity and peace I provide for it.’

10“This is what the Lord says: ‘You say about this place, “It is a desolate waste, without people or animals.” Yet in the towns of Judah and the streets of Jerusalem that are deserted, inhabited by neither people nor animals, there will be heard once more 11the sounds of joy and gladness, the voices of bride and bridegroom, and the voices of those who bring thank offerings to the house of the Lord, saying,

“Give thanks to the Lord Almighty,  
    for the Lord is good;  
    his love endures forever.”

For I will restore the fortunes of the land as they were before,’ says the Lord.

#### **Footnotes:**

1. [Jeremiah 33:7](https://classic.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Jeremiah+33%3A6%E2%80%9311&version=NIV#en-NIV-19783) Or will restore the fortunes of Judah and Israel

Then this city will bring me renown, joy, praise and honor. [Jeremiah 33:9](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Jer%2033.9)

At seventeen, Dowayne had to leave his family’s home in Manenberg, a part of Cape Town, South Africa, because of his stealing and addiction to heroin. He didn’t go far, building a shack of corrugated metal in his mother’s backyard, which soon became known as the Casino, a place to use drugs. When he was nineteen, however, Dowayne came to saving faith in Jesus. His journey off drugs was long and exhausting, but he got clean with God’s help and with the support of friends who are believers in Jesus. And ten years after Dowayne built the Casino, he and others turned the hut into a house church. What was once a dark and foreboding place now is a place of worship and prayer.

The leaders of this church look to [Jeremiah 33](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Jer%2033) for how God can bring healing and restoration to people and places, as He’s done with Dowayne and the former Casino. The prophet Jeremiah spoke to God’s people in captivity, saying that although the city would not be spared, yet God would heal His people and would “rebuild them,” cleansing them from their sin ([Jeremiah 33:7–8](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Jer%2033.7%E2%80%938)). Then the city would bring Him joy, renown, and honor (v. 9).

When we’re tempted to despair over the sin that brings heartbreak and brokenness, let’s continue to pray that God will bring healing and hope, even as He’s done in a backyard in Manenberg.

By:  [Amy Boucher Pye](https://odb.org/author/amyboucherpye/)

#### **Reflect & Pray**

How have you seen God bring restoration in your own life and in the lives of others? How can you pray for His healing this day?

God, thank You for sparking new life in what appeared to be dead. Continue to work in me, that I might share Your saving love with others.

#### **Insight**

Jeremiah spoke the words in [Jeremiah 33:6–11](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Jer%2033.6%E2%80%9311) while Jerusalem was under siege from Nebuchadnezzar’s army. Yet he himself was a prisoner of King Zedekiah at the time. Displeased with Jeremiah’s persistent message of judgment against Judah, the king had the prophet placed in confinement (see 32:2–5). Imagine being a prisoner inside a starving city surrounded by a hostile army. That was Jeremiah’s personal situation. Yet God continued to speak through His prophet. Chapter 33 begins, “While Jeremiah was still confined in the courtyard of the guard, the word of the Lord came to him a second time” (v. 1). The message again was bleak. The city’s desperate measures to save itself would fail. But verse 6 signals a change. God would bring a future deliverance.

Visit [ChristianUniversity.org/OTTBP](https://ChristianUniversity.org/OTTBP) to gain an overview of the book of Jeremiah.

# God Calling – 12/28/20

# Signs and Feelings

**Our Lord, Thou art here. Let us feel Thy nearness.**

I am here. Do not need feeling too much. To ask for feeling too much is to ask for a sign, and then the answer is the same as that I gave when on earth. "There shall no sign be given but the sign of the prophet Jonah. . . . For as Jonah was three days and three nights . . . so shall the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth."

Veiled from sight to the unbeliever. To the believer the veiling is only temporary, to be followed by a glorious Resurrection. . . .

What does it matter what you feel? What matters is what I am, was, and ever shall be to you -- A Risen Lord. . . . the feeling that I am with you may depend upon any passing mood of yours -- upon a change of circumstances, upon a mere trifle.

I am uninfluenced by circumstances. . . . My Promise given is kept. I am here, one with you in tender loving friendship.

"Thou art near, O Lord; and all thy commandments are truth." Psalm 119:151