

Welcome to
OPEN CHURCH at Peace Church
on the 3rd Sunday of Advent,
11 December 2022, 12:00pm



Peace Church United Methodist

Munich, Germany

Chiemgastr. 7 | 81549 München

Meditations

Devotionals

The Impact of His Love

LISA STACKPOLE (WISCONSIN, USA)

The Lord your God is with you, the Mighty Warrior who saves. He will take great delight in you; in his love he will no longer rebuke you, but will rejoice over you with singing.

Zephaniah 3:17 (NIV)

Christmas is usually my favourite season, and I look forward to it with great anticipation. Many years ago, though, I was filled with emptiness despite the approaching holiday. A relationship with a man I loved and had planned my future with had fallen apart that autumn. All of a sudden, my life felt aimless.

I spent the holidays at home with my widowed father that year. One drab day in late December, I looked through his kitchen window and felt that the overcast weather mirrored my emotions. When I turned around, I noticed my father's appointment calendar. On the date I had arrived, he had written my flight information. Underneath it was a note: "Lisa home. Happy, happy!"

Suddenly, I was overwhelmed by the impact of his love. How could I feel so empty knowing that my presence caused my father so much joy? On a deeper level, I was reminded that I also have a heavenly parent who loves me and rejoices over me, even more than my earthly parent does. I knew this love would carry me through my breakup and any other hard times that I might face. Now, decades later, I can say that God's love continues to sustain me.

TODAY'S PRAYER

Gracious Lord, thank you for your unfailing love, which is the anchor for our lives. Amen.

Source: <https://www.upperroom.org/devotionals/en-2022-11-27>

Never without Help

SELINA MACHADO (BLANTYRE, MALAWI)

Your way of life should be free from the love of money, and you should be content with what you have. After all, [the Lord] has said, I will never leave you or abandon you.

Hebrews 13:5 (CEB)

I remember the day I received the email telling me that I had been accepted to a master's degree program in a different country. I was sitting in the airport when my new reality sank in. I was leaving my continent, my family, and my friends and would be on my own for two years. In my first class, I remember feeling like I had no idea what was going on. I wondered, Will I even make it? Will I have anyone to help me?

During that season, I would sit in my room and speak the words from Hebrews 13:5 to myself to help me be conscious of God's presence in my life. The more I did this, the more it helped me through each day — even when I felt stuck, nervous, confused, alone, and homesick. By God's grace, I was surrounded by people who helped me with my coursework. I met people who helped me feel at home in a strange country. I was not alone.

We can trust in God's word. No matter our situation or where we are, we can always rely on God to be right here with us, helping us through.

TODAY'S PRAYER

Dear Lord, thank you for always being with us. Help us each day to be attentive to your presence. Amen.

Unexpected

NENYE ANDY-EKE (LAGOS, NIGERIA)

This will be a sign for you: you will find a child wrapped in bands of cloth and lying in a manger.

Luke 2:12 (NRSV)

For a year, my sister, Chinwe, and I had excitedly planned her son's destination wedding. Three days before the wedding, I flew from Lagos to Puerto Vallarta, Mexico, with decorations for the colourful Nigerian ceremony. But then we had a shock. Chinwe was hospitalized, getting tested for kidney stones. If the tests were positive, she would need urgent surgery. Thanks be to God, the tests were negative.

We can never anticipate what might happen to our plans. I wonder if Mary expected her long, dusty journey to Bethlehem or the rejection of the innkeeper. Did she know her beloved baby — the eternal King — would have to lie in a manger? Similarly, the apostles in Mark 10 expected Jesus to have an earthly throne and wanted to sit beside him. They didn't anticipate their modest lives or the suffering they would experience.

Disappointments dot our lives — failed business ventures, broken relationships, lost loved ones, rejected job applications, unanswered prayers. When things do not go as we expect, we can learn to trust the eternal King who was born in a stable. God is always with us.

TODAY'S PRAYER

Loving Father, increase our faith and trust that you will see us through every disappointment. Amen.

God is with us

S. THEVANESAN (NEW YORK, USA)

Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men.

Luke 2:14 (KJV)

In Sri Lanka, the island nation where I was born, Christmas is celebrated by all people regardless of their background or religion. When we read Luke 2:14, we see that no one is excluded. Christmas is an invitation to everyone to hear the good news of Jesus' birth.

Long before the first Christmas, Jesus' birth was predicted by the prophet Isaiah. And in Matthew 1:23 we read that in fulfillment of Isaiah's prophecy, Jesus is to be called Emmanuel, which means "God is with us." In these scary and confusing times, the word Emmanuel resonates powerfully in my soul. God is with us all!

Christmas offers us a time to focus on the nature of God, the goodness of creation, the sacredness of all people, and the ways the holy and the secular mingle. God is with us in joy and sorrow, in poverty and wealth, in waking and in sleeping. God makes us merry, bears our pain, keeps our peace, and reconciles us. God is truly with us always.

TODAY'S PRAYER

Eternal God, thank you for giving us Emmanuel, a reminder of your everlasting presence. Help us to see you in every part of creation in this holy season. Amen.

The Story of Christmas

AARON CARUSO (CONNECTICUT, USA)

Unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord.

Luke 2:11 (KJV)

When I visited New York City during the holiday season, I stopped by the Christmas tree at Rockefeller Center. It was over 70 feet tall and looked spectacular with thousands of lights and a bright star. I was delighted by the sounds of families and friends enjoying the festivities together. Even strangers jovially greeted one another with a wave while holding hot coffee or cocoa.

Christmastime is wonderful, and I enjoy it every year. But if I didn't know the true meaning of Christmas, my joy would be as temporary as the tree displayed each year at Rockefeller Center. When the holidays are over, the tree is taken away, and so are the special greetings of the season. But praise God that the good tidings of great joy given that first Christmas remain always! My happiness during the holiday season is fleeting, but my joy in Jesus is eternal.

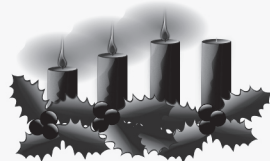
The story of Christmas is one of salvation and redemption. Jesus Christ, the Son of God, came into the world to redeem us and to restore our relationship with God, and that story keeps me awestruck all year long.

TODAY'S PRAYER

Heavenly Father, thank you for the gift of your Son, Jesus, and for our everlasting joy in him. Amen.

Notes

Welcome to OPEN CHURCH at Peace Church on the 3rd Sunday of Advent, 11 December 2022



Please enter the church and take part in the following worship activities:

- #Meditations
(every half hour)
@Sanctuary
- # Craft activities - making stars & Nativity picture
@Fellowship Hall
- # 'Advent Interactive' (activity especially for kids/teens, but great for all ages)
@Golden Room (next to the accessible bathroom)
- #Play Corner for little kids
@Fellowship Hall
- #Music & Singing Station
@Sanctuary
- #Prayer Station
@ Chapel
- # Prayer Wall
@Sanctuary (at all times)
- #Festive drinks and snacks (bring & share) - open during the whole time of Open Church Sunday
@Church Yard

TIMELINE

- @ ALL TIMES
Festive drinks and snacks
- @ ALL TIMES
Welcome & info desk
- 12:00-12:10
Welcome & Meditation
@Sanctuary
- 12:10-12:25
Activities I
- 12:30-12:35 (Break)
Meditation @Sanctuary
- 12:40-13:00
Activities II
- 13:00-13:05 (Break)
Meditation @Sanctuary
- 13:10-13:30
Activities III
- 13:30-13:35 (Break)
Meditation @Sanctuary
- 13:40-14:00
Activities IV
- 14:00-14:05
Closing Meditation & Blessing @Sanctuary
- 14:05-14:30
Church coffee
@ Church yard
- (Tiding up the rooms
'till 14:50 the latest)

A Warm Welcome to ALL!



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