



THE BIRTH OF

Eternal

HOPE

ADVENT DEVOTIONAL 2024

“The Birth of Eternal Hope”

Daily Advent Devotional Readings

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Advent is a precious time to reflect again on the fulfilment of God's promise of deliverance, that came with the birth of Christ. And this year we want to reflect on the idea of hope.

I remember there was a time in University, where I felt so lost: searching for connection, for purpose, for meaning. And at that time, Psalm 130 spoke to my soul. Like many pieces of art, I remember that as I read it, it spoke to me, even though I couldn't articulate why. It spoke to the longing in my heart, and it spoke a hope I couldn't fathom for myself.

¹ Out of the depths I cry to you, Lord;

² Lord, hear my voice.

Let your ears be attentive
to my cry for mercy.

³ If you, Lord, kept a record of sins,
Lord, who could stand?

⁴ But with you there is forgiveness,
so that we can, with reverence, serve you.

⁵ I wait for the Lord, my whole being waits,
and in his word I put my hope.

⁶ I wait for the Lord
more than watchmen wait for the morning,
more than watchmen wait for the morning.

⁷ Israel, put your hope in the Lord,
for with the Lord is unfailing love
and with him is full redemption.

⁸ He himself will redeem Israel
from all their sins.

It was the repeated refrain, "*more than watchmen wait for the morning, more than watchmen wait for the morning*" that caught my attention. This yearning for daybreak in a long night.

I think for many of us, hope can be an elusive idea. At times it can feel too scary to hope, for fear of disappointment. And when we are in a season of a long night, it can feel that daybreak will never come.

This season of Advent, I encourage you to let hope arise in your heart again. As you reflect on the scriptures in this booklet, let the Lord breathe hope into your heart and soul again.

Put your hope in the Lord, for with the Lord is unfailing love, and with Him is full redemption.

- Bert Han

Advent is an exciting time of preparation, anticipation and an invitation.

Preparation as we get ready to recenter our lives and focus on who Jesus is, His birth, His coming to save us all, some 2000 years ago.

Anticipation because we long for and anticipate his second coming again some time in the future, a day and hour unknown, but we eagerly anticipate and wait for this with expectant hearts. And it is an *invitation* into a season where we are all invited to worship the one true King and Saviour of the world, an invitation not reserved just to a select few, but to all of humanity.

This year for Christmas 2024, my prayer is that we all join together with other brothers and sisters to refocus and realign ourselves with who Jesus is, how He came to save, why we say that Jesus is Lord, and how His birth gives birth to an eternal hope for all. I pray that this devotional will be a springboard for this.

Everyday we have set advent readings, along with some optional questions to help spark further thoughts. There are also some action prompts for prayer, and some tasks which you can use as a challenge to yourself or to do those things together with others. If you have had any special encounters or moments with the Lord, even some interesting musings from any promptings from the advent devotional, please do share with your lifegroup leaders or someone on the pastoral team—it is always super encouraging and inspiring to hear what God is saying to brothers and sisters in our church! We have also asked some church leaders to share some fun recipes or crafts for you and your family or friends to do together too! Feel free to send us a photo of your creations during this season in the BCEC WhatsApp bulletin board group chat! And a thanks to Bert for always encouraging me to write these materials, thanks for the wonderful words of encouragement in the forward and afterward to bookend this devotional!

A special shoutout and thanks to Henna Ho for the artwork and beautiful calligraphy. And big heartfelt thanks to Dan Li for helping me with this project, editing and making sure things get done. Also thankful for those who contributed with recipes and instructions, sharing some lovely gems with us all!

May this advent devotional guide lead you to develop a deeper sense of awe and wonder for God, and may the Spirit lead you to a content place of lasting hope for today and the coming days ahead.

Christmas can be a busy time for many, but may we still prioritise having precious moments delving into His word, unpacking gems of hope, may the words on the following pages illuminate and guide you to a place of hope rooted firmly in Christ, like an anchor to your soul.

It is because of God's hope for humanity that we even have a chance to celebrate the birth of Jesus Christ each year, with that in mind, may the hope of Christ compel you to keep seeking after Him day by day, even after this devotional comes to an end.

May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that by the power of the Holy Spirit you may abound in hope. — Romans 15:13

How to make the most of this devotional

As we spend time with God in His word, here are some useful tips to help you get the most out of reading scripture in this Advent Devotional book in this Christmas season.

- **Location matters:** find a quiet space free of distractions, but not somewhere too comfortable you'll fall asleep. Find somewhere that can help you focus better on God's words as you let God speak to you.
- **Daily time of transformation:** being regular with your bible reading is important. It's similar to brushing your teeth; missing it once may not seem like it makes a huge difference, but over time it affects your health and relationships (nobody likes bad breath!) And so spending time daily with God can have wonderful health benefits, as your daily dose of encouragement, letting the creator of the universe simply transform you. What a great time of refreshment with the Lord!
- **Praying to start:** Before reading scripture, pray that the Holy Spirit would reveal either something new, or remind you of an important gem of hope.
- **Slowly and patiently:** Remember to not rush through your time with God; read slowly and carefully, or read more than once to let the words sink into your soul. Simply be open to the Holy Spirit's leading and guidance during this devotional time.
- **Study and make notes:** If you have a physical printed copy of this book, we have made space for you to write notes, scribble or doodle, as the Spirit prompts you to. If you're reading this via an electronic device, feel free to add comments and annotate the pages to best suit your needs. Alternatively, you can journal in a separate notebook alongside this devotional, if you wish to. Highlight any words or sentences that you feel the Holy Spirit prompt you with, write questions or thoughts as you delve deeper into God's word.

After the bible passage, you're invited to respond with the reflections, which are split into three parts:

- **Hope for yourself:** these are specific reflective questions to give you an opportunity to think deeper about what you have read, hopefully benefiting your own personal walk with God.
- **Hope for your three:** you're invited to commit to praying over three specific people within your community. They can be believers or non-believers, people within your family or friends.
- You can list them here:
 1. _____
 2. _____
 3. _____
- **Hope for the world:** this is your time to commit to praying for specific communities that the Lord brings to mind, it can be our city, our nation, or another place in the world or people group, or simply something in the news. The point of highlighting this is to continuously remember that God's kingdom is not just our own bubbles, but there is hope for all on a global scale. You may wish to let the passage prompt you with specific words and points to help guide your prayers.

Of course these three points are optional for you.

If the Lord prompts you to just read the passage and study it in your own format, please feel free to do so!

There are Saturdays which are "Grace Days" in case you have missed a passage or two.

However, I recommend that if there are many days to catch up on, just restart by going to the current day instead of catching up. The important thing is to spend time with the Lord, and not to do it legalistically.

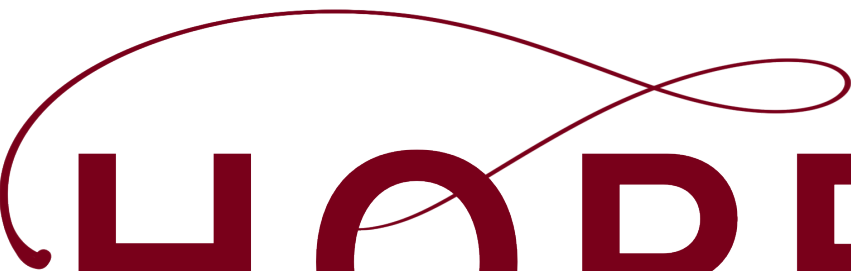
May the Lord guide you during this time!

- Ansy

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WEEK 1

HOPE & FAITH



HOPE FOR THE WORLD

GENESIS 1-2, JOHN 1:1-14

Genesis 1

¹ In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.

² Now the earth was formless and empty, darkness was over the surface of the deep, and the Spirit of God was hovering over the waters.

³ And God said, 'Let there be light,' and there was light.

⁴ God saw that the light was good, and he separated the light from the darkness. ⁵ God called the light 'day', and the darkness he called 'night'. And there was evening, and there was morning – the first day.

⁶ And God said, 'Let there be a vault between the waters to separate water from water.' ⁷ So God made the vault and separated the water under the vault from the water above it. And it was so. ⁸ God called the vault 'sky'. And there was evening, and there was morning – the second day.

⁹ And God said, 'Let the water under the sky be gathered to one place, and let dry ground appear.' And it was so. ¹⁰ God called the dry ground 'land', and the gathered waters he called 'seas'. And God saw that it was good.

¹¹ Then God said, 'Let the land produce vegetation: seed-bearing plants and trees on the land that bear fruit with seed in it, according to their various kinds.' And it was so. ¹² The land produced vegetation: plants bearing seed

according to their kinds and trees bearing fruit with seed in it according to their kinds. And God saw that it was good. ¹³ And there was evening, and there was morning – the third day.

¹⁴ And God said, 'Let there be lights in the vault of the sky to separate the day from the night, and let them serve as signs to mark sacred times, and days and years, ¹⁵ and let them be lights in the vault of the sky to give light on the earth.' And it was so. ¹⁶ God made two great lights – the greater light to govern the day and the lesser light to govern the night. He also made the stars. ¹⁷ God set them in the vault of the sky to give light on the earth, ¹⁸ to govern the day and the night, and to separate light from darkness. And God saw that it was good. ¹⁹ And there was evening, and there was morning – the fourth day.

²⁰ And God said, 'Let the water teem with living creatures, and let birds fly above the earth across the vault of the sky.' ²¹ So God created the great creatures of the sea and every living thing with which the water teems and that moves about in it, according to their kinds, and every winged bird according to its kind. And God saw that it was good. ²² God blessed them and said, 'Be fruitful and increase in number and fill the water in the seas, and let the birds increase on the earth.' ²³ And there was evening, and there was morning – the fifth day.

²⁴ And God said, 'Let the land produce living creatures according to their kinds: the livestock, the creatures that move along the ground, and the wild animals, each according to its kind.' And it was so. ²⁵ God made the wild animals according to their kinds, the livestock according to their kinds, and all the creatures that move along the ground according to their kinds. And God saw that it was good.

²⁶ Then God said, 'Let us make mankind in our image, in our likeness, so that they may rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky, over the livestock and all the wild animals, and over all the creatures that move along the ground.'

²⁷ So God created mankind in his own image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them.

²⁸ God blessed them and said to them, 'Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky and over every living creature that moves on the ground.'

²⁹ Then God said, 'I give you every seed-bearing plant on the face of the whole earth and every tree that has fruit with seed in it. They will be yours for food. ³⁰ And to all the beasts of the earth and all the birds in the sky and all the creatures that move along the ground – everything that has the breath of life in it – I give every green plant for food.' And it was so.

³¹ God saw all that he had made, and it was very good. And there was evening, and there was morning – the sixth day.

Genesis 2

¹ Thus the heavens and the earth were completed in all their vast array.

² By the seventh day God had finished the work he had been doing; so on the seventh day he rested from all his work. ³ Then God blessed the seventh day and made it holy, because on it he rested from all the work of creating that he had done.

⁴ This is the account of the heavens and the earth when they were created, when the Lord God made the earth and the heavens.

⁵ Now no shrub had yet appeared on the earth and no plant had yet sprung up, for the Lord God had not sent rain on the earth and there was no one to work the ground, ⁶ but streams came up from the earth and watered the whole surface of the ground. ⁷ Then the Lord God formed a man from the dust of the ground and

breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living being.

⁸ Now the Lord God had planted a garden in the east, in Eden; and there he put the man he had formed. ⁹ The Lord God made all kinds of trees grow out of the ground – trees that were pleasing to the eye and good for food. In the middle of the garden were the tree of life and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

¹⁰ A river watering the garden flowed from Eden; from there it was separated into four headwaters. ¹¹ The name of the first is the Pishon; it winds through the entire land of Havilah, where there is gold. ¹² (The gold of that land is good; aromatic resin and onyx are also there.) ¹³ The name of the second river is the Gihon; it winds through the entire land of Cush. ¹⁴ The name of the third river is the Tigris; it runs along the east side of Ashur. And the fourth river is the Euphrates.

¹⁵ The Lord God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to work it and take care of it. ¹⁶ And the Lord God commanded the man, 'You are free to eat from any tree in the garden; ¹⁷ but you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for when you eat from it you will certainly die.'

¹⁸ The Lord God said, 'It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper suitable for him.'

¹⁹ Now the Lord God had formed out of the ground all the wild animals and all the birds in the sky. He brought them to the man to see what he would name them; and whatever the man called each living creature, that was its name. ²⁰ So the man gave names to all the livestock, the birds in the sky and all the wild animals.

But for Adam no suitable helper was found. ²¹ So the Lord God caused the man to fall into a deep sleep; and while he was sleeping, he took one of the man's ribs and then closed up the place with flesh. ²² Then the Lord God made a woman from the rib he had taken out of the man, and he brought her to the man.

²³ The man said,

'This is now bone of my bones
and flesh of my flesh;
she shall be called "woman",
for she was taken out of man.'

²⁴ That is why a man leaves his father and mother and is united to his wife, and they become one flesh.

²⁵ Adam and his wife were both naked, and they felt no shame.

John 1:1-14

¹ In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.

² He was with God in the beginning. ³ Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made. ⁴ In him was life, and that life was the light of all mankind. ⁵ The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.

⁶ There was a man sent from God whose name was John. ⁷ He came as a witness to testify concerning that light, so that through him all might believe. ⁸ He himself was not the light; he came only as a witness to the light.

⁹ The true light that gives light to everyone was coming into the world. ¹⁰ He was in the world, and though the world was made through him, the world did not recognise him. ¹¹ He came to that which was his own, but his own did not receive him. ¹² Yet to all who did receive him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God – ¹³ children born not of natural descent, nor of human decision or a husband's will, but born of God.

¹⁴ The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the one and only Son, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth.

Hope for yourself:

How does God remind us from today's reading that we can have hope in Him and His word?

What are some things you hope to learn during this devotional advent time? Jot them down.

Hope for your three:

Pray for your three, drawing special attention to the positive attributes God has blessed your three with. Praise God for these things.

Hope for the world:

From today's creation narrative reading, what is something in the world and the environment that we can pray over? How can we have hope for God's world?

DAY 2

MONDAY 02.12



HOPE

FOR

HUMANITY

GENESIS 3, ROMANS 5:12-21

Genesis 3

³ Now the snake was more crafty than any of the wild animals the Lord God had made. He said to the woman, 'Did God really say, "You must not eat from any tree in the garden"?'

² The woman said to the snake, 'We may eat fruit from the trees in the garden, ³ but God did say, "You must not eat fruit from the tree that is in the middle of the garden, and you must not touch it, or you will die."'

⁴ 'You will not certainly die,' the snake said to the woman.

⁵ 'For God knows that when you eat from it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.'

⁶ When the woman saw that the fruit of the tree was good for food and pleasing to the eye, and also desirable for gaining wisdom, she took some and ate it. She also gave some to her husband, who was with her, and he ate it. ⁷ Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they

realised that they were naked; so they sewed fig leaves together and made coverings for themselves.

⁸ Then the man and his wife heard the sound of the Lord God as he was walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and they hid from the Lord God among the trees of the garden. ⁹ But the Lord God called to the man, 'Where are you?'

¹⁰ He answered, 'I heard you in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked; so I hid.'

¹¹ And he said, 'Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten from the tree from which I commanded you not to eat?'

¹² The man said, 'The woman you put here with me – she gave me some fruit from the tree, and I ate it.'

¹³ Then the Lord God said to the woman, 'What is this you have done?'

The woman said, 'The snake deceived me, and I ate.'

¹⁴ So the Lord God said to the snake, 'Because you have done this,

'Cursed are you above all livestock
and all wild animals!

You will crawl on your belly
and you will eat dust
all the days of your life.

¹⁵ And I will put enmity
between you and the woman,
and between your offspring and hers;
he will crush your head,
and you will strike his heel.'

¹⁶ To the woman he said,

'I will make your pains in childbearing very severe;
with painful labour you will give birth to children.
Your desire will be for your husband,
and he will rule over you.'

¹⁷ To Adam he said, 'Because you listened to your wife
and ate fruit from the tree about which I commanded
you, "You must not eat from it,"

'Cursed is the ground because of you;
through painful toil you will eat food from it
all the days of your life.

¹⁸ It will produce thorns and thistles for you,
and you will eat the plants of the field.

¹⁹ By the sweat of your brow
you will eat your food
until you return to the ground,
since from it you were taken;
for dust you are
and to dust you will return.'

²⁰ Adam named his wife Eve, because she would become
the mother of all the living.

²¹ The Lord God made garments of skin for Adam and his
wife and clothed them. ²² And the Lord God said, 'The
man has now become like one of us, knowing good and
evil. He must not be allowed to reach out his hand and
take also from the tree of life and eat, and live for ever.' ²³
So the Lord God banished him from the Garden of Eden
to work the ground from which he had been taken. ²⁴ After
he drove the man out, he placed on the east side of the
Garden of Eden cherubim and a flaming sword flashing
back and forth to guard the way to the tree of life.

Romans 5:12-21

¹² Therefore, just as sin entered the world through one man, and death through sin, and in this way death came to all people, because all sinned –

¹³ To be sure, sin was in the world before the law was given, but sin is not charged against anyone's account where there is no law. ¹⁴ Nevertheless, death reigned from the time of Adam to the time of Moses, even over those who did not sin by breaking a command, as did Adam, who is a pattern of the one to come.

¹⁵ But the gift is not like the trespass. For if the many died by the trespass of the one man, how much more did God's grace and the gift that came by the grace of the one man, Jesus Christ, overflow to the many! ¹⁶ Nor can the gift of God be compared with the result of one man's sin: the judgment followed one sin and brought condemnation, but the gift followed many trespasses and brought justification. ¹⁷ For if, by the trespass of the one man, death reigned through that one man, how much more will those who receive God's abundant provision of grace and of the gift of righteousness reign in life through the one man, Jesus Christ!

¹⁸ Consequently, just as one trespass resulted in condemnation for all people, so also one righteous act resulted in justification and life for all people. ¹⁹ For just as through the disobedience of the one man the many were made sinners, so also through the obedience of the one man the many will be made righteous.

²⁰ The law was brought in so that the trespass might increase. But where sin increased, grace increased all the more, ²¹ so that, just as sin reigned in death, so also grace might reign through righteousness to bring eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Hope for yourself:

What is one word that stands out to you, in your reading for today? Why do you think that is?
Is there hope from the Lord regarding this?
How so?

Hope for your three:

How is Jesus our hopeful Saviour for your three?
Pray that the Lord will reveal Himself to them.

Hope for the world:

Ask the Lord to reveal to you an image from the news, something to pray over.
How is Jesus Lord over this?
And how can there be hope for this news item?

DAY 3

TUESDAY 03.12

COVENANT OF HOPE

GENESIS 12:1-9;15; 17;1-13, HEBREWS 11:8-12

Genesis 12:1-9

¹ The Lord had said to Abram, 'Go from your country, your people and your father's household to the land I will show you.

² I will make you into a great nation,
and I will bless you;

I will make your name great,
and you will be a blessing.

³ I will bless those who bless you,
and whoever curses you I will curse;
and all peoples on earth
will be blessed through you.'

⁴ So Abram went, as the Lord had told him; and Lot went with him. Abram was seventy-five years old when he set out from Harran. ⁵ He took his wife Sarai, his nephew Lot, all the possessions they had accumulated and the people they had acquired in Harran, and they set out for the land of Canaan, and they arrived there.

⁶ Abram travelled through the land as far as the site of the great tree of Moreh at Shechem. At that time the

Canaanites were in the land. ⁷ The Lord appeared to Abram and said, 'To your offspring I will give this land.' So he built an altar there to the Lord, who had appeared to him.

⁸ From there he went on towards the hills east of Bethel and pitched his tent, with Bethel on the west and Ai on the east. There he built an altar to the Lord and called on the name of the Lord.

⁹ Then Abram set out and continued towards the Negev.

Genesis 15

¹ After this, the word of the Lord came to Abram in a vision:

'Do not be afraid, Abram.
I am your shield,
your very great reward.'

² But Abram said, 'Sovereign Lord, what can you give me since I remain childless and the one who will inherit

my estate is Eliezer of Damascus?’³ And Abram said, ‘You have given me no children; so a servant in my household will be my heir.’

⁴Then the word of the Lord came to him: ‘This man will not be your heir, but a son who is your own flesh and blood will be your heir.’⁵ He took him outside and said, ‘Look up at the sky and count the stars – if indeed you can count them.’ Then he said to him, ‘So shall your offspring be.’

⁶Abram believed the Lord, and he credited it to him as righteousness.

⁷He also said to him, ‘I am the Lord, who brought you out of Ur of the Chaldeans to give you this land to take possession of it.’

⁸But Abram said, ‘Sovereign Lord, how can I know that I shall gain possession of it?’

⁹So the Lord said to him, ‘Bring me a heifer, a goat and a ram, each three years old, along with a dove and a young pigeon.’

¹⁰Abram brought all these to him, cut them in two and arranged the halves opposite each other; the birds, however, he did not cut in half. ¹¹Then birds of prey came down on the carcasses, but Abram drove them away.

¹²As the sun was setting, Abram fell into a deep sleep, and a thick and dreadful darkness came over him. ¹³Then the Lord said to him, ‘Know for certain that for four hundred years your descendants will be strangers in a country not their own and that they will be enslaved and ill-treated there. ¹⁴But I will punish the nation they serve as slaves, and afterwards they will come out with great possessions. ¹⁵You, however, will go to your ancestors in peace and be buried at a good old age. ¹⁶In the fourth generation your descendants will come back here, for the sin of the Amorites has not yet reached its full measure.’

¹⁷When the sun had set and darkness had fallen, a smoking brazier with a blazing torch appeared and passed between the pieces. ¹⁸On that day the Lord made a covenant with Abram and said, ‘To your descendants I give this land, from the Wadi of Egypt to the great river, the Euphrates – ¹⁹the land of the Kenites, Kenizzites, Kadmonites, ²⁰Hittites, Perizzites, Rephaites, ²¹Amorites, Canaanites, Girdashites and Jebusites.’

Genesis 17:1-13

¹When Abram was ninety-nine years old, the Lord appeared to him and said, ‘I am God Almighty, walk before me faithfully and be blameless. ²Then I will make my covenant between me and you and will greatly increase your numbers.’

³Abram fell face down, and God said to him, ⁴‘As for me, this is my covenant with you: you will be the father of many nations. ⁵No longer will you be called Abram; your name will be Abraham, for I have made you a father of many nations. ⁶I will make you very fruitful; I will make nations of you, and kings will come from you. ⁷I will establish my covenant as an everlasting covenant between me and you and your descendants after you for the generations to come, to be your God and the God of your descendants after you. ⁸The whole land of Canaan, where you now reside as a foreigner, I will give as an everlasting possession to you and your descendants after you; and I will be their God.’

⁹Then God said to Abraham, ‘As for you, you must keep my covenant, you and your descendants after you for the generations to come. ¹⁰This is my covenant with you and your descendants after you, the covenant you are to keep: every male among you shall be circumcised.

¹¹You are to undergo circumcision, and it will be the sign of the covenant between me and you. ¹²For the generations to come every male among you who is eight days old must be circumcised, including those born in your household or bought with money from a foreigner – those who are not your offspring. ¹³Whether born in your household or bought with your money, they must be circumcised. My covenant in your flesh is to be an everlasting covenant.

Hebrews 11:8-12

⁸ By faith Abraham, when called to go to a place he would later receive as his inheritance, obeyed and went, even though he did not know where he was going. ⁹ By faith he made his home in the promised land like a stranger in a foreign country; he lived in tents, as did Isaac and Jacob, who were heirs with him of the same promise. ¹⁰ For he was looking forward to the city with foundations, whose architect and builder is God. ¹¹ And by faith even Sarah, who was past childbearing age, was enabled to bear children because she considered him faithful who had made the promise. ¹² And so from this one man, and he as good as dead, came descendants as numerous as the stars in the sky and as countless as the sand on the seashore.

Hope for yourself:

What's an encouraging thing about Abraham's character you have learnt today?
How can we too, be hopeful in the Lord like how Abraham was?

Hope for your three:

What are some things you suspect your three might be lacking in? Pray for them over these things.

Hope for the world:

From today's passages, ask the Lord which foreign country to pray over. Pray for the churches and missionaries there: that they will hold to the hope in Christ.

DAY 4

WEDNESDAY 04.12

THE SURPRISE OF HOPE



GENESIS 17:15-21; 21:1-7

Genesis 17:15-21

¹⁵ God also said to Abraham, 'As for Sarai your wife, you are no longer to call her Sarai; her name will be Sarah. ¹⁶ I will bless her and will surely give you a son by her. I will bless her so that she will be the mother of nations; kings of peoples will come from her.'

¹⁷ Abraham fell face down; he laughed and said to himself, 'Will a son be born to a man a hundred years old? Will Sarah bear a child at the age of ninety?' ¹⁸ And Abraham said to God, 'If only Ishmael might live under your blessing!'

¹⁹ Then God said, 'Yes, but your wife Sarah will bear you a son, and you will call him Isaac. I will establish my covenant with him as an everlasting covenant for his descendants after him. ²⁰ And as for Ishmael, I have heard you: I will surely bless him; I will make him fruitful and will greatly increase his numbers. He will be the father of twelve rulers, and I will make him into a great nation. ²¹ But my covenant I will establish with Isaac, whom Sarah will bear to you by this time next year.'

Genesis 21:1-7

¹ Now the Lord was gracious to Sarah as he had said, and the Lord did for Sarah what he had promised. ² Sarah became pregnant and bore a son to Abraham in his old age, at the very time God had promised him. ³ Abraham gave the name Isaac to the son Sarah bore him. ⁴ When his son Isaac was eight days old, Abraham circumcised him, as God commanded him. ⁵ Abraham was a hundred years old when his son Isaac was born to him.

⁶ Sarah said, 'God has brought me laughter, and everyone who hears about this will laugh with me.' ⁷ And she added, 'Who would have said to Abraham that Sarah would nurse children? Yet I have borne him a son in his old age.'

Hope for yourself:

What were some surprises for you, from today's passage?
How can we be hopeful from this?

Hope for your three:

Pray for God to surprise your three.
Be specific in how.

Hope for the world:

Is there something positive in the news today that gives you hope that God is helping? Pray and give thanks for this.

DAY 5

THURSDAY 05.12

HOPE OF THINGS TO COME

GENESIS 22:1-19, GALATIANS 3:6-14, 29

Genesis 22:1-19

¹ Some time later God tested Abraham. He said to him, 'Abraham!'

'Here I am,' he replied.

² Then God said, 'Take your son, your only son, whom you love – Isaac – and go to the region of Moriah. Sacrifice him there as a burnt offering on a mountain that I will show you.'

³ Early the next morning Abraham got up and loaded his donkey. He took with him two of his servants and his son Isaac. When he had cut enough wood for the burnt offering, he set out for the place God had told him about. ⁴ On the third day Abraham looked up and saw the place in the distance. ⁵ He said to his servants, 'Stay here with the donkey while I and the boy go over there. We will worship and then we will come back to you.'

⁶ Abraham took the wood for the burnt offering and placed it on his son Isaac, and he himself carried the fire and the knife. As the two of them went on together, ⁷ Isaac spoke up and said to his father Abraham, 'Father?'

'Yes, my son?' Abraham replied.

'The fire and wood are here,' Isaac said, 'but where is the lamb for the burnt offering?'

⁸ Abraham answered, 'God himself will provide the lamb for the burnt offering, my son.' And the two of them went on together.

⁹ When they reached the place God had told him about, Abraham built an altar there and arranged the wood on it. He bound his son Isaac and laid him on the altar, on top of the wood. ¹⁰ Then he reached out his hand and took the knife to slay his son. ¹¹ But the angel of the Lord called out to him from heaven, 'Abraham! Abraham!'

'Here I am,' he replied.

¹² 'Do not lay a hand on the boy,' he said. 'Do not do anything to him. Now I know that you fear God, because you have not withheld from me your son, your only son.'

¹³ Abraham looked up and there in a thicket he saw a ram caught by its horns. He went over and took the ram and sacrificed it as a burnt offering instead of his son. ¹⁴ So Abraham called that place The Lord Will Provide. And to this day it is said, 'On the mountain of the Lord it will be provided.'

¹⁵ The angel of the Lord called to Abraham from heaven a second time ¹⁶ and said, 'I swear by myself, declares the Lord, that because you have done this and have not withheld your son, your only son, ¹⁷ I will surely bless you and make your descendants as numerous as the stars in the sky and as the sand on the seashore. Your descendants will take possession of the cities of their enemies, ¹⁸ and through your offspring all nations on earth will be blessed, because you have obeyed me.'

¹⁹ Then Abraham returned to his servants, and they set off together for Beersheba. And Abraham stayed in Beersheba.

Galatians 3:6-14

⁶ So also Abraham ‘believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness.’

⁷ Understand, then, that those who have faith are children of Abraham. ⁸ Scripture foresaw that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, and announced the gospel in advance to Abraham: ‘All nations will be blessed through you.’

⁹ So those who rely on faith are blessed along with Abraham, the man of faith.

¹⁰ For all who rely on the works of the law are under a curse, as it is written: ‘Cursed is everyone who does not continue to do everything written in the Book of the Law.’ ¹¹ Clearly no one who relies on the law is justified before God, because ‘the righteous will live by faith.’ ¹² The law is not based on faith; on the contrary, it says, ‘The person who does these things will live by them.’ ¹³ Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us, for it is written: ‘Cursed is everyone who is hung on a pole.’ ¹⁴ He redeemed us in order that the blessing given to Abraham might come to the Gentiles through Christ Jesus, so that by faith we might receive the promise of the Spirit.

Galatians 3:29

²⁹ If you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham’s seed, and heirs according to the promise.

Hope for yourself:

What are some points from today’s passage that make your heart hopeful? Why?

Hope for your three:

How are your three? Why not check their social media? Or if you’re able, check in with them today. Make a note of how to pray and commit to keep praying for them.

Hope for the world:

Ask God to reveal to you a specific people group, one that you don’t know much about. Do a Google search “how to pray for the _____ community” and let that be your guide for your prayer

DAY 6

FRIDAY 06.12

HOPEful FAITH

DEUTERONOMY 18:15-19, HEBREWS 3

Hebrews 3

¹ Therefore, holy brothers and sisters, who share in the heavenly calling, fix your thoughts on Jesus, whom we acknowledge as our apostle and high priest. ² He was faithful to the one who appointed him, just as Moses was faithful in all God's house. ³ Jesus has been found worthy of greater honour than Moses, just as the builder of a house has greater honour than the house itself. ⁴ For every house is built by someone, but God is the builder of everything. ⁵ 'Moses was faithful as a servant in all God's house,' bearing witness to what would be spoken by God in the future. ⁶ But Christ is faithful as the Son over God's house. And we are his house, if indeed we hold firmly to our confidence and the hope in which we glory.

⁷ So, as the Holy Spirit says:

'Today, if you hear his voice,

⁸ do not harden your hearts
as you did in the rebellion,

during the time of testing in the wilderness,

⁹ where your ancestors tested and tried me,
though for forty years they saw what I did.

¹⁰ That is why I was angry with that generation;
I said, "Their hearts are always going astray,
and they have not known my ways."

¹¹ So I declared on oath in my anger,
"They shall never enter my rest."

¹² See to it, brothers and sisters, that none of you has a sinful, unbelieving heart that turns away from the living God. ¹³ But encourage one another daily, as long as it is called "Today", so that none of you may be hardened by sin's deceitfulness. ¹⁴ We have come to share in Christ, if indeed we hold our original conviction firmly to the very end.

¹⁵ As has just been said:

'Today, if you hear his voice,

do not harden your hearts
as you did in the rebellion.'

¹⁶ Who were they who heard and rebelled? Were they not all those Moses led out of Egypt? ¹⁷ And with whom was he angry for forty years? Was it not with those who sinned, whose bodies perished in the wilderness? ¹⁸ And to whom did God swear that they would never enter his rest if not to those who disobeyed? ¹⁹ So we see that they were not able to enter, because of their unbelief.

Deuteronomy 18:15-19

¹⁵The Lord your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among you, from your fellow Israelites. You must listen to him. ¹⁶For this is what you asked of the Lord your God at Horeb on the day of the assembly when you said, ‘Let us not hear the voice of the Lord our God nor see this great fire any more, or we will die.’

¹⁷The Lord said to me: ‘What they say is good. ¹⁸I will raise up for them a prophet like you from among their fellow Israelites, and I will put my words in his mouth. He will tell them everything I command him. ¹⁹I myself will call to account anyone who does not listen to my words that the prophet speaks in my name.

Hope for yourself:

How did Moses find hope in the Lord?
Note down some examples, how can we be reminded to remain hopeful through these points?

Hope for your three:

Pray for your three to hear God’s voice.
Ask God to reveal to you specific points to pray for your three over.

Hope for the world:

Pray for the government in either our own country, or overseas. Pray that God would help them lead well, drawing from any points from today’s passage.

SATURDAY 07.12

Today can be a spare day to catch up from any days you've missed or meditate on a passage of scripture that really spoke to you from this past week.

Feel free to use this space to write a prayer, or you can draw or journal.

14 THE WORD BECAME FLESH AND
MADE HIS DWELLING AMONG US.
WE HAVE SEEN HIS GLORY,
THE GLORY OF THE ONE AND ONLY SON,
WHO CAME FROM THE FATHER

FULL OF
grace AND *truth*

JOHN 1:14

Special thanks to Henna Ho for this delicious recipe! Everyone loves a good brownie or two or three!

HENNA'S CHRISTMAS TREE BROWNIE

Ingredients

Brownies

- 200g unsalted butter
- 100g dark chocolate
- 100g milk chocolate
- 4 medium eggs (or 3 large)
- 180g caster sugar
- 100g plain flour
- 50g cocoa powder
- 100 g milk chocolate chips
- 80g chopped pecan or walnuts

Icing and Decoration (optional)

- Chocolate fingers, halved
- 100 g unsalted butter
- 120 icing sugar
- 1 tsp vanilla extract
- Green food colouring/ 1 tsp of matcha powder

Method

Brownies

1. Preheat oven to 180C/160C Fan and line a 9 Square baking tray with parchment paper
2. Melt together the butter, and dark chocolate in a heatproof bowl over a pot of boiling water or in the microwave for 2-3 minutes until melted. Leave to the side to cool to room temperature
3. Using an electric whisk/stand mixer, whisk together the eggs & caster sugar on high speed for 6-7 few minutes until the colour has turned pale and is double the original volume of the amount of eggs + sugar and cream like texture
4. Pour the cooled chocolate mixture into eggs and fold together using a spatula carefully until fully combined
5. Sift in the cocoa powder and plain flour and then fold together again
6. Once combined well, fold through the chocolate chips and nuts and pour into the prepared tin – bake in the oven for 25-30 minutes! Once baked, leave to cool in the tin completely
7. Once cooled, cut the brownies into the triangles/ tree shapes and carefully insert the halved chocolate finger into the base of the brownies

Icing (optional)

1. Cream together the butter and icing sugar until pale and fluffy
2. Add in vanilla extract and green food colouring or matcha powder and mix
3. Transfer to a large piping bag with your chosen piping tip and pipe some zigzag lines on to your brownies
4. Decorate icing with choice of topping ie sprinklers or more chocolate chips. I used M&Ms in picture shown



WEEK 2

HOPE

AND

PEACE

THE WAY OF HOPE & RIGHTEOUSNESS

DEUTERONOMY 5-6

Deuteronomy 5-6

5 Moses summoned all Israel and said:

Hear, Israel, the decrees and the laws I declare in your hearing today. Learn them and be sure to follow them.

² The Lord our God made a covenant with us at Horeb.

³ It was not with our ancestors that the Lord made this covenant, but with us, with all of us who are alive here today. ⁴ The Lord spoke to you face to face out of the fire on the mountain. ⁵ (At that time I stood between the Lord and you to declare to you the word of the Lord, because you were afraid of the fire and did not go up the mountain.) And he said:

⁶ 'I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery.

⁷ 'You shall have no other gods before me.

⁸ 'You shall not make for yourself an image in the form of anything in heaven above or on the earth beneath or in the waters below. ⁹ You shall not bow down to them or worship them; for I, the Lord your God, am a jealous God, punishing the children for the sin of the parents to the third and fourth generation of those who hate me, ¹⁰ but showing love to a thousand generations of those who love me and keep my commandments.

¹¹ 'You shall not misuse the name of the Lord your God, for the Lord will not hold anyone guiltless who misuses his name.

¹² 'Observe the Sabbath day by keeping it holy, as the Lord your God has commanded you. ¹³ Six days you shall labour and do all your work, ¹⁴ but the seventh day is a sabbath to the Lord your God. On it you shall not do any work, neither you, nor your son or daughter, nor your male or female servant, nor your ox, your donkey or any of your animals, nor any foreigner residing in your towns, so that your male and female servants may rest, as you do. ¹⁵ Remember that you were slaves in Egypt and that the Lord your God brought you out of there with a mighty hand and an outstretched arm. Therefore the Lord your God has commanded you to observe the Sabbath day.

¹⁶ 'Honour your father and your mother, as the Lord your God has commanded you, so that you may live long and that it may go well with you in the land the Lord your God is giving you.

¹⁷ 'You shall not murder.

¹⁸ 'You shall not commit adultery.

¹⁹ ‘You shall not steal.

²⁰ ‘You shall not give false testimony against your neighbour.

²¹ ‘You shall not covet your neighbour’s wife. You shall not set your desire on your neighbour’s house or land, his male or female servant, his ox or donkey, or anything that belongs to your neighbour.’

²² These are the commandments the Lord proclaimed in a loud voice to your whole assembly there on the mountain from out of the fire, the cloud and the deep darkness; and he added nothing more. Then he wrote them on two stone tablets and gave them to me.

²³ When you heard the voice out of the darkness, while the mountain was ablaze with fire, all the leaders of your tribes and your elders came to me. ²⁴ And you said, ‘The Lord our God has shown us his glory and his majesty, and we have heard his voice from the fire. Today we have seen that a person can live even if God speaks with them. ²⁵ But now, why should we die? This great fire will consume us, and we will die if we hear the voice of the Lord our God any longer. ²⁶ For what mortal has ever heard the voice of the living God speaking out of fire, as we have, and survived? ²⁷ Go near and listen to all that the Lord our God says. Then tell us whatever the Lord our God tells you. We will listen and obey.’

²⁸ The Lord heard you when you spoke to me, and the Lord said to me, ‘I have heard what this people said to you. Everything they said was good. ²⁹ Oh, that their hearts would be inclined to fear me and keep all my commands always, so that it might go well with them and their children for ever!’

³⁰ ‘Go, tell them to return to their tents. ³¹ But you stay here with me so that I may give you all the commands, decrees and laws that you are to teach them to follow in the land I am giving them to possess.’

³² So be careful to do what the Lord your God has commanded you; do not turn aside to the right or to the left. ³³ Walk in obedience to all that the Lord your God has commanded you, so that you may live and prosper and prolong your days in the land that you will possess.

6 These are the commands, decrees and laws the Lord your God directed me to teach you to observe in the land that you are crossing the Jordan to possess, ² so that you, your children and their children after them may fear the Lord your God as long as you live by keeping all his decrees and commands that I give you, and so that you

may enjoy long life. ³ Hear, Israel, and be careful to obey so that it may go well with you and that you may increase greatly in a land flowing with milk and honey, just as the Lord, the God of your ancestors, promised you.

⁴ Hear, O Israel: the Lord our God, the Lord is one. ⁵ Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength. ⁶ These commandments that I give you today are to be on your hearts. ⁷ Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up. ⁸ Tie them as symbols on your hands and bind them on your foreheads. ⁹ Write them on the door-frames of your houses and on your gates.

¹⁰ When the Lord your God brings you into the land he swore to your fathers, to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, to give you – a land with large, flourishing cities you did not build, ¹¹ houses filled with all kinds of good things you did not provide, wells you did not dig, and vineyards and olive groves you did not plant – then when you eat and are satisfied, ¹² be careful that you do not forget the Lord, who brought you out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery.

¹³ Fear the Lord your God, serve him only and take your oaths in his name. ¹⁴ Do not follow other gods, the gods of the peoples around you; ¹⁵ for the Lord your God, who is among you, is a jealous God and his anger will burn against you, and he will destroy you from the face of the land. ¹⁶ Do not put the Lord your God to the test as you did at Massah. ¹⁷ Be sure to keep the commands of the Lord your God and the stipulations and decrees he has given you. ¹⁸ Do what is right and good in the Lord’s sight, so that it may go well with you and you may go in and take over the good land that the Lord promised on oath to your ancestors, ¹⁹ thrusting out all your enemies before you, as the Lord said.

²⁰ In the future, when your son asks you, ‘What is the meaning of the stipulations, decrees and laws the Lord our God has commanded you?’ ²¹ tell him: ‘We were slaves of Pharaoh in Egypt, but the Lord brought us out of Egypt with a mighty hand. ²² Before our eyes the Lord sent signs and wonders – great and terrible – on Egypt and Pharaoh and his whole household. ²³ But he brought us out from there to bring us in and give us the land that he promised on oath to our ancestors. ²⁴ The Lord commanded us to obey all these decrees and to fear the Lord our God, so that we might always prosper and be kept alive, as is the case today. ²⁵ And if we are careful to obey all this law before the Lord our God, as he has commanded us, that will be our righteousness.’

Matthew 22:34-40

³⁴ Hearing that Jesus had silenced the Sadducees, the Pharisees got together. ³⁵ One of them, an expert in the law, tested him with this question: ³⁶ “Teacher, which is the greatest commandment in the Law?”

³⁷ Jesus replied: “Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.” ³⁸ This is the first and greatest commandment. ³⁹ And the second is like it: “Love your neighbour as yourself.” ⁴⁰ All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments.’

Hope for yourself:

What is one word that stood out to you from today's passages? Why?

Hope for your three:

Do your three go to church? Do they have fellowship and support? Pray for their faith. If they aren't yet believers, pray for their salvation.

Hope for the world:

Ask for God to reveal to you a specific missionary or missions-sending agency. Pray for God's hopeful message to be proclaimed to the people the missionaries are ministering to. Why not send this missionary a message or recorded prayer to them?

DAY 9

MONDAY 09.12

BOLDLY GOING IN HOPE



JOSHUA 1:1-18; 24:1-28

Joshua 1:1-18

¹ After the death of Moses the servant of the Lord, the Lord said to Joshua son of Nun, Moses' assistant: ² 'Moses my servant is dead. Now then, you and all these people, get ready to cross the River Jordan into the land I am about to give to them – to the Israelites. ³ I will give you every place where you set your foot, as I promised Moses. ⁴ Your territory will extend from the desert to Lebanon, and from the great river, the Euphrates – all the Hittite country – to the Mediterranean Sea in the west. ⁵ No one will be able to stand against you all the days of your life. As I was with Moses, so I will be with you; I will never leave you nor forsake you. ⁶ Be strong and courageous, because you will lead these people to inherit the land I swore to their ancestors to give them.

⁷ 'Be strong and very courageous. Be careful to obey all the law my servant Moses gave you; do not turn from it to the right or to the left, that you may be successful wherever you go. ⁸ Keep this Book of the Law always on your lips; meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do everything written in it. Then you will be prosperous and successful. ⁹ Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous. Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged, for the Lord your God will be with you wherever you go.'

¹⁰ So Joshua ordered the officers of the people: ¹¹ 'Go through the camp and tell the people, "Get your

provisions ready. Three days from now you will cross the Jordan here to go in and take possession of the land the Lord your God is giving you for your own."

¹² But to the Reubenites, the Gadites and the half-tribe of Manasseh, Joshua said, ¹³ 'Remember the command that Moses the servant of the Lord gave you after he said, "The Lord your God will give you rest by giving you this land." ¹⁴ Your wives, your children and your livestock may stay in the land that Moses gave you east of the Jordan, but all your fighting men, ready for battle, must cross over ahead of your fellow Israelites. You are to help them ¹⁵ until the Lord gives them rest, as he has done for you, and until they too have taken possession of the land that the Lord your God is giving them. After that, you may go back and occupy your own land, which Moses the servant of the Lord gave you east of the Jordan towards the sunrise.'

¹⁶ Then they answered Joshua, 'Whatever you have commanded us we will do, and wherever you send us we will go. ¹⁷ Just as we fully obeyed Moses, so we will obey you. Only may the Lord your God be with you as he was with Moses. ¹⁸ Whoever rebels against your word and does not obey it, whatever you may command them, will be put to death. Only be strong and courageous!'

Joshua 24:1-28

¹ Then Joshua assembled all the tribes of Israel at Shechem. He summoned the elders, leaders, judges and officials of Israel, and they presented themselves before God.

² Joshua said to all the people, 'This is what the Lord, the God of Israel, says: "Long ago your ancestors, including Terah the father of Abraham and Nahor, lived beyond the River Euphrates and worshipped other gods. ³ But I took your father Abraham from the land beyond the Euphrates and led him throughout Canaan and gave him many descendants. I gave him Isaac, ⁴ and to Isaac I gave Jacob and Esau. I assigned the hill country of Seir to Esau, but Jacob and his family went down to Egypt.

⁵ "Then I sent Moses and Aaron, and I afflicted the Egyptians by what I did there, and I brought you out. ⁶ When I brought your people out of Egypt, you came to the sea, and the Egyptians pursued them with chariots and horsemen as far as the Red Sea. ⁷ But they cried to the Lord for help, and he put darkness between you and the Egyptians; he brought the sea over them and covered them. You saw with your own eyes what I did to the Egyptians. Then you lived in the wilderness for a long time.

⁸ "I brought you to the land of the Amorites who lived east of the Jordan. They fought against you, but I gave them into your hands. I destroyed them from before you, and you took possession of their land. ⁹ When Balak son of Zippor, the king of Moab, prepared to fight against Israel, he sent for Balaam son of Beor to put a curse on you. ¹⁰ But I would not listen to Balaam, so he blessed you again and again, and I delivered you out of his hand.

¹¹ "Then you crossed the Jordan and came to Jericho. The citizens of Jericho fought against you, as did also the Amorites, Perizzites, Canaanites, Hittites, Girgashites, Hivites and Jebusites, but I gave them into your hands. ¹² I sent the hornet ahead of you, which drove them out before you – also the two Amorite kings. You did not do it with your own sword and bow. ¹³ So I gave you a land on which you did not toil and cities you did not build; and you live in them and eat from vineyards and olive groves that you did not plant."

¹⁴ "Now fear the Lord and serve him with all faithfulness. Throw away the gods your ancestors worshipped beyond the River Euphrates and in Egypt, and serve

the Lord. ¹⁵ But if serving the Lord seems undesirable to you, then choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve, whether the gods your ancestors served beyond the Euphrates, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land you are living. But as for me and my household, we will serve the Lord.'

¹⁶ Then the people answered, 'Far be it from us to forsake the Lord to serve other gods! ¹⁷ It was the Lord our God himself who brought us and our parents up out of Egypt, from that land of slavery, and performed those great signs before our eyes. He protected us on our entire journey and among all the nations through which we travelled. ¹⁸ And the Lord drove out before us all the nations, including the Amorites, who lived in the land. We too will serve the Lord, because he is our God.'

¹⁹ Joshua said to the people, 'You are not able to serve the Lord. He is a holy God; he is a jealous God. He will not forgive your rebellion and your sins. ²⁰ If you forsake the Lord and serve foreign gods, he will turn and bring disaster on you and make an end of you, after he has been good to you.'

²¹ But the people said to Joshua, 'No! We will serve the Lord.'

²² Then Joshua said, 'You are witnesses against yourselves that you have chosen to serve the Lord.'

'Yes, we are witnesses,' they replied.

²³ 'Now then,' said Joshua, 'throw away the foreign gods that are among you and yield your hearts to the Lord, the God of Israel.'

²⁴ And the people said to Joshua, 'We will serve the Lord our God and obey him.'

²⁵ On that day Joshua made a covenant for the people, and there at Shechem he reaffirmed for them decrees and laws. ²⁶ And Joshua recorded these things in the Book of the Law of God. Then he took a large stone and set it up there under the oak near the holy place of the Lord.

²⁷ 'See!' he said to all the people. 'This stone will be a witness against us. It has heard all the words the Lord has said to us. It will be a witness against you if you are untrue to your God.'

²⁸ Then Joshua dismissed the people, each to their own inheritance.

Hope for yourself:

What's something you learnt about Joshua's
hopefulness in the Lord, from today's passages?
How can we apply that to our day to day?

Hope for your three:

In which areas of your threes' lives do they need
to be bold and courageous over? Pray for them
regarding this.

Hope for the world:

Pray for the countries experiencing war and chaos.
Pray for the displaced people to find hope and
refuge in Him.

DAY 10

TUESDAY 10.12



HOPE

IN THE MAKING

JUDGES 2:16-23, 1 SAMUEL 8:4-22; 16:1-13

Judges 2:16-23

¹⁶Then the Lord raised up judges, who saved them out of the hands of these raiders. ¹⁷Yet they would not listen to their judges but prostituted themselves to other gods and worshipped them. They quickly turned from the ways of their ancestors, who had been obedient to the Lord's commands. ¹⁸Whenever the Lord raised up a judge for them, he was with the judge and saved them out of the hands of their enemies as long as the judge lived; for the Lord relented because of their groaning under those who oppressed and afflicted them. ¹⁹But when the judge died, the people returned to ways even more corrupt than those of their ancestors, following other gods and serving and worshipping them. They refused to give up their evil practices and stubborn ways.

²⁰Therefore the Lord was very angry with Israel and said, 'Because this nation has violated the covenant I ordained for their ancestors and has not listened to me, ²¹I will no longer drive out before them any of the nations Joshua left when he died. ²²I will use them to test Israel and see whether they will keep the way of the Lord and walk in it as their ancestors did.' ²³The Lord had allowed those nations to remain; he did not drive them out at once by giving them into the hands of Joshua.

1 Samuel 8:4-22

⁴ So all the elders of Israel gathered together and came to Samuel at Ramah. ⁵ They said to him, 'You are old, and your sons do not follow your ways; now appoint a king to lead us, such as all the other nations have.'

⁶ But when they said, 'Give us a king to lead us,' this displeased Samuel; so he prayed to the Lord. ⁷ And the Lord told him: 'Listen to all that the people are saying to you; it is not you they have rejected, but they have rejected me as their king. ⁸ As they have done from the day I brought them up out of Egypt until this day, forsaking me and serving other gods, so they are doing to you. ⁹ Now listen to them; but warn them solemnly and let them know what the king who will reign over them will claim as his rights.'

¹⁰ Samuel told all the words of the Lord to the people who were asking him for a king. ¹¹ He said, 'This is what the king who will reign over you will claim as his rights: he will take your sons and make them serve with his chariots and horses, and they will run in front of his chariots. ¹² Some he will assign to be commanders of thousands and commanders of fifties, and others to plough his ground and reap his harvest, and still others to make weapons of war and equipment for his chariots. ¹³ He will take your daughters to be perfumers and cooks and bakers. ¹⁴ He will take the best of your fields and vineyards and olive groves and give them to his attendants. ¹⁵ He will take a tenth of your grain and of your vintage and give it to his officials and attendants. ¹⁶ Your male and female servants and the best of your cattle and donkeys he will take for his own use. ¹⁷ He will take a tenth of your flocks, and you yourselves will become his slaves. ¹⁸ When that day comes, you will cry out for relief from the king you have chosen, but the Lord will not answer you in that day.'

¹⁹ But the people refused to listen to Samuel. 'No!' they said. 'We want a king over us. ²⁰ Then we shall be like all the other nations, with a king to lead us and to go out before us and fight our battles.'

²¹ When Samuel heard all that the people said, he repeated it before the Lord. ²² The Lord answered, 'Listen to them and give them a king.'

Then Samuel said to the Israelites, 'Everyone go back to your own town.'

1 Samuel 16:1-13

¹ The Lord said to Samuel, 'How long will you mourn for Saul, since I have rejected him as king over Israel? Fill your horn with oil and be on your way; I am sending you to Jesse of Bethlehem. I have chosen one of his sons to be king.'

² But Samuel said, 'How can I go? If Saul hears about it, he will kill me.'

The Lord said, 'Take a heifer with you and say, "I have come to sacrifice to the Lord." ³ Invite Jesse to the sacrifice, and I will show you what to do. You are to anoint for me the one I indicate.'

⁴ Samuel did what the Lord said. When he arrived at Bethlehem, the elders of the town trembled when they met him. They asked, 'Do you come in peace?'

⁵ Samuel replied, 'Yes, in peace; I have come to sacrifice to the Lord. Consecrate yourselves and come to the sacrifice with me.' Then he consecrated Jesse and his sons and invited them to the sacrifice.

⁶ When they arrived, Samuel saw Eliab and thought, 'Surely the Lord's anointed stands here before the Lord.'

⁷ But the Lord said to Samuel, 'Do not consider his appearance or his height, for I have rejected him. The Lord does not look at the things people look at. People look at the outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart.'

⁸ Then Jesse called Abinadab and made him pass in front of Samuel. But Samuel said, 'The Lord has not chosen this one either.' ⁹ Jesse then made Shammah pass by, but Samuel said, 'Nor has the Lord chosen this one.'

¹⁰ Jesse made seven of his sons pass before Samuel, but Samuel said to him, 'The Lord has not chosen these.' ¹¹ So he asked Jesse, 'Are these all the sons you have?'

'There is still the youngest,' Jesse answered. 'He is tending the sheep.'

Samuel said, 'Send for him; we will not sit down until he arrives.'

¹² So he sent for him and had him brought in. He was glowing with health and had a fine appearance and handsome features.

Hope for yourself:

How can today's passages point us to hope in Christ? List some areas in your life where you want Christ to rule over.

Hope for your three:

How can the Lord be made evident in the lives of your three? Pray for the Lord to reveal Himself to them.

Hope for the world:

Spend some time looking at a news website, asking the Lord how to pray for them and let the Spirit guide you in prayer.

DWELLING HOPE

2 SAMUEL 5:1-5

2 Samuel 5:1-5

¹ All the tribes of Israel came to David at Hebron and said, ‘We are your own flesh and blood. ² In the past, while Saul was king over us, you were the one who led Israel on their military campaigns. And the Lord said to you, “You shall shepherd my people Israel, and you shall become their ruler.”’

³ When all the elders of Israel had come to King David at Hebron, the king made a covenant with them at Hebron before the Lord, and they anointed David king over Israel.

⁴ David was thirty years old when he became king, and he reigned for forty years. ⁵ In Hebron he reigned over Judah for seven years and six months, and in Jerusalem he reigned over all Israel and Judah for thirty-three years.

2 Samuel 7

¹ After the king was settled in his palace and the Lord had given him rest from all his enemies around him, ² he said to Nathan the prophet, ‘Here I am, living in a house of cedar, while the ark of God remains in a tent.’

³ Nathan replied to the king, ‘Whatever you have in mind, go ahead and do it, for the Lord is with you.’

⁴ But that night the word of the Lord came to Nathan, saying:

⁵ ‘Go and tell my servant David, “This is what the Lord says: are you the one to build me a house to dwell

in? ⁶ I have not dwelt in a house from the day I brought the Israelites up out of Egypt to this day. I have been moving from place to place with a tent as my dwelling. ⁷ Wherever I have moved with all the Israelites, did I ever say to any of their rulers whom I commanded to shepherd my people Israel, ‘Why have you not built me a house of cedar?’”’

⁸ ‘Now then, tell my servant David, “This is what the Lord Almighty says: I took you from the pasture, from tending the flock, and appointed you ruler over my people Israel. ⁹ I have been with you wherever you have gone, and I have cut off all your enemies from before you. Now I will make your name great, like the names of the greatest men on earth. ¹⁰ And I will provide a place for my people Israel and will plant them so that they can have a home of their own and no longer be disturbed. Wicked people shall not oppress them any more, as they did at the beginning ¹¹ and have done ever since the time I appointed leaders over my people Israel. I will also give you rest from all your enemies.

“The Lord declares to you that the Lord himself will establish a house for you: ¹² when your days are over and you rest with your ancestors, I will raise up your offspring to succeed you, your own flesh and blood, and I will establish his kingdom. ¹³ He is the one who will build a house for my Name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom for ever. ¹⁴ I will be his father, and he shall be my son. When he does wrong, I will punish him with a rod wielded by men, with floggings inflicted by human hands. ¹⁵ But my love will never be taken away from him, as I took it away from Saul, whom I removed

from before you. ¹⁶ Your house and your kingdom shall endure for ever before me; your throne shall be established for ever.”

¹⁷ Nathan reported to David all the words of this entire revelation.

¹⁸ Then King David went in and sat before the Lord, and he said:

‘Who am I, Sovereign Lord, and what is my family, that you have brought me this far? ¹⁹ And as if this were not enough in your sight, Sovereign Lord, you have also spoken about the future of the house of your servant – and this decree, Sovereign Lord, is for a mere human!

²⁰ ‘What more can David say to you? For you know your servant, Sovereign Lord. ²¹ For the sake of your word and according to your will, you have done this great thing and made it known to your servant.

²² ‘How great you are, Sovereign Lord! There is no one like you, and there is no God but you, as we have heard with our own ears. ²³ And who is like your people Israel – the one nation on earth that God went out to redeem as a people for himself, and to make a name for himself, and to perform great and awesome wonders by driving out nations and their gods from before your people, whom you redeemed from Egypt? ²⁴ You have established your people Israel as your very own for ever, and you, Lord, have become their God.

²⁵ ‘And now, Lord God, keep for ever the promise you have made concerning your servant and his house. Do as you promised, ²⁶ so that your name will be great for ever. Then people will say, “The Lord Almighty is God over Israel!” And the house of your servant David will be established in your sight.

²⁷ ‘Lord Almighty, God of Israel, you have revealed this to your servant, saying, “I will build a house for you.” So your servant has found courage to pray this prayer to you. ²⁸ Sovereign Lord, you are God! Your covenant is trustworthy, and you have promised these good things to your servant. ²⁹ Now be pleased to bless the house of your servant, that it may continue for ever in your sight; for you, Sovereign Lord, have spoken, and with your blessing the house of your servant will be blessed for ever.

Jeremiah 23:5-6

⁵ ‘The days are coming,’ declares the Lord,
‘when I will raise up for David a righteous Branch
a King who will reign wisely
and do what is just and right in the land.
⁶ In his days Judah will be saved
and Israel will live in safety.
This is the name by which he will be called:
The Lord Our Righteous Saviour.

Hope for yourself:

How can today's passages point us to hope in Christ?
List some areas in your life where you want Christ to
rule over.

Hope for your three:

How can the Lord be made evident in the lives of your
three? Pray for the Lord to reveal Himself to them.

Hope for the world:

Spend some time looking at a news website, asking the
Lord how to pray for them and let the spirit guide you
in prayer.

DAY 12

THURSDAY 12.12

A HOPEFUL SONG

PSALMS 89, 1 KINGS 8-9

Psalm 89

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

² I will declare that your love stands firm for ever,
that you have established your faithfulness in heaven itself.

³ You said, 'I have made a covenant with my chosen one,
I have sworn to David my servant,

⁴ "I will establish your line for ever
and make your throne firm through all generations."

⁵ The heavens praise your wonders, Lord,
your faithfulness too, in the assembly of the holy ones.

⁶ For who in the skies above can compare with the Lord?
Who is like the Lord among the heavenly beings?

⁷ In the council of the holy ones God is greatly feared;
he is more awesome than all who surround him.

⁸ Who is like you, Lord God Almighty?
You, Lord, are mighty, and your faithfulness surrounds you.

⁹ You rule over the surging sea;
when its waves mount up, you still them.

¹⁰ You crushed Rahab like one of the slain;
with your strong arm you scattered your enemies.

¹¹ The heavens are yours, and yours also the earth;
you founded the world and all that is in it.

¹² You created the north and the south;
Tabor and Hermon sing for joy at your name.

¹³ Your arm is endowed with power;
your hand is strong, your right hand exalted.

¹⁴ Righteousness and justice are the foundation of your throne;
love and faithfulness go before you.

¹⁵ Blessed are those who have learned to acclaim you,
who walk in the light of your presence, Lord.

¹⁶ They rejoice in your name all day long;
they celebrate your righteousness.

¹⁷ For you are their glory and strength,
and by your favour you exalt our horn.

¹⁸ Indeed, our shield belongs to the Lord,
our king to the Holy One of Israel.

¹⁹ Once you spoke in a vision,
to your faithful people you said:

'I have bestowed strength on a warrior;
I have raised up a young man from among the people.

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

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

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

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

²⁴ My faithful love will be with him,

and through my name his horn will be exalted.

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

²⁶ He will call out to me, "You are my Father,
my God, the Rock my Saviour."

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

²⁸ I will maintain my love to him for ever,
and my covenant with him will never fail.

²⁹ I will establish his line for ever,
his throne as long as the heavens endure.

³⁰ 'If his sons forsake my law and do not follow my statutes,

³¹ if they violate my decrees
and fail to keep my commands,

³² I will punish their sin with the rod,
their iniquity with flogging;

³³ but I will not take my love from him,
nor will I ever betray my faithfulness.

³⁴ I will not violate my covenant
or alter what my lips have uttered.

³⁵ Once for all, I have sworn by my holiness –
and I will not lie to David –

³⁶ that his line will continue for ever
and his throne endure before me like the sun;

³⁷ it will be established for ever like the moon,
the faithful witness in the sky.'

³⁸ But you have rejected, you have spurned,
you have been very angry with your anointed one.

³⁹ You have renounced the covenant with your servant
and have defiled his crown in the dust.

⁴⁰ You have broken through all his walls
and reduced his strongholds to ruins.

⁴¹ All who pass by have plundered him;
he has become the scorn of his neighbours.

⁴² You have exalted the right hand of his foes;
you have made all his enemies rejoice.

⁴³ Indeed, you have turned back the edge of his sword
and have not supported him in battle.

⁴⁴ You have put an end to his splendour
and cast his throne to the ground.

⁴⁵ You have cut short the days of his youth;
you have covered him with a mantle of shame.

⁴⁶ How long, Lord? Will you hide yourself for ever?
How long will your wrath burn like fire?

⁴⁷ Remember how fleeting is my life.
For what futility you have created all humanity!

⁴⁸ Who can live and not see death,
or who can escape the power of the grave?

⁴⁹ Lord, where is your former great love,
which in your faithfulness you swore to David?

⁵⁰ Remember, Lord, how your servant has been mocked,
how I bear in my heart the taunts of all the nations,

⁵¹ the taunts with which your enemies, Lord, have mocked,
with which they have mocked every step of your anointed one.

⁵² Praise be to the Lord for ever!
Amen and Amen.

1 Kings 8-9

8 Then King Solomon summoned into his presence at Jerusalem the elders of Israel, all the heads of the tribes and the chiefs of the Israelite families, to bring up the ark of the Lord's covenant from Zion, the City of David. ² All the Israelites came together to King Solomon at the time of the festival in the month of Ethanim, the seventh month.

³ When all the elders of Israel had arrived, the priests took up the ark, ⁴ and they brought up the ark of the Lord and the tent of meeting and all the sacred furnishings in it. The priests and Levites carried them up, ⁵ and King Solomon and the entire assembly of Israel that had gathered about him were before the ark, sacrificing so many sheep and cattle that they could not be recorded or counted.

⁶ The priests then brought the ark of the Lord's covenant to its place in the inner sanctuary of the temple, the Most Holy Place, and put it beneath the wings of the cherubim. ⁷ The cherubim spread their wings over the place of the ark and overshadowed the ark and its carrying poles. ⁸ These poles were so long that their ends could be seen from the Holy Place in front of the inner sanctuary, but not from outside the Holy Place; and they are still there today. ⁹ There was nothing in the ark except the two stone tablets that Moses had placed in it at Horeb, where the Lord made a covenant with the Israelites after they came out of Egypt.

¹⁰ When the priests withdrew from the Holy Place, the cloud filled the temple of the Lord. ¹¹ And the priests could not perform their service because of the cloud, for the glory of the Lord filled his temple.

¹² Then Solomon said, "The Lord has said that he would dwell in a dark cloud; ¹³ I have indeed built a magnificent temple for you, a place for you to dwell for ever."

¹⁴ While the whole assembly of Israel was standing there, the king turned round and blessed them. ¹⁵ Then he said:

"Praise be to the Lord, the God of Israel, who with his own hand has fulfilled what he promised with his own mouth to my father David. For he said, ¹⁶ "Since the day I brought my people Israel out of Egypt, I have not chosen a city in any tribe of Israel to have a temple built so that my Name might be there, but I have chosen David to rule my people Israel."

¹⁷ "My father David had it in his heart to build a temple for the Name of the Lord, the God of Israel. ¹⁸ But the Lord said to my father David, "You did well to have it in your heart to build a temple for my Name. ¹⁹ Nevertheless, you are not the one to build the temple, but your son, your own flesh and blood – he is the one who will build the temple for my Name."

²⁰ "The Lord has kept the promise he made: I have succeeded David my father and now I sit on the throne of Israel, just as the Lord promised, and I have built the temple for the Name of the Lord, the God of Israel. ²¹ I have provided a place there for the ark, in which is the covenant of the Lord that he made with our ancestors when he brought them out of Egypt."

²² Then Solomon stood before the altar of the Lord in front of the whole assembly of Israel, spread out his hands towards heaven ²³ and said:

"Lord, the God of Israel, there is no God like you in heaven above or on earth below – you who keep your covenant of love with your servants who continue wholeheartedly in your way. ²⁴ You have kept your promise to your servant David my father; with your mouth you have promised and with your hand you have fulfilled it – as it is today.

²⁵ "Now Lord, the God of Israel, keep for your servant David my father the promises you made to him when you said, "You shall never fail to have a successor to sit before me on the throne of Israel, if only your descendants are careful in all they do to walk before me faithfully as you have done." ²⁶ And now, God of Israel, let your word that you promised your servant David my father come true.

²⁷ "But will God really dwell on earth? The heavens, even the highest heaven, cannot contain you. How much less this temple I have built! ²⁸ Yet give attention to your servant's prayer and his plea for mercy, Lord my God. Hear the cry and the prayer that your servant is praying in your presence this day. ²⁹ May your eyes be open towards this temple night and day, this place of which you said, "My Name shall be there," so that you will hear the prayer your servant prays towards this place. ³⁰ Hear the supplication of your servant and of your people Israel when they pray towards this place. Hear from heaven, your dwelling place, and when you hear, forgive.

³¹ "When anyone wrongs their neighbour and is required to take an oath and they come and swear the oath before your altar in this temple, ³² then hear from heaven and act. Judge between your servants, condemning the guilty by bringing down on their heads what they have done, and vindicating the innocent by treating them in accordance with their innocence.

³³ "When your people Israel have been defeated by an enemy because they have sinned against you, and when they turn back to you and give praise to your name, praying and making supplication to you in this temple, ³⁴ then hear from heaven and forgive the sin of your people Israel and bring them back to the land you gave to their ancestors.

³⁵ "When the heavens are shut up and there is no rain because your people have sinned against you, and when

they pray towards this place and give praise to your name and turn from their sin because you have afflicted them,³⁶ then hear from heaven and forgive the sin of your servants, your people Israel. Teach them the right way to live, and send rain on the land you gave your people for an inheritance.

³⁷ ‘When famine or plague comes to the land, or blight or mildew, locusts or grasshoppers, or when an enemy besieges them in any of their cities, whatever disaster or disease may come,³⁸ and when a prayer or plea is made by anyone among your people Israel – being aware of the afflictions of their own hearts, and spreading out their hands towards this temple – ³⁹ then hear from heaven, your dwelling-place. Forgive and act; deal with everyone according to all they do, since you know their hearts (for you alone know every human heart), ⁴⁰ so that they will fear you all the time they live in the land you gave our ancestors.

⁴¹ ‘As for the foreigner who does not belong to your people Israel but has come from a distant land because of your name – ⁴² for they will hear of your great name and your mighty hand and your outstretched arm – when they come and pray towards this temple, ⁴³ then hear from heaven, your dwelling-place. Do whatever the foreigner asks of you, so that all the peoples of the earth may know your name and fear you, as do your own people Israel, and may know that this house I have built bears your Name.

⁴⁴ ‘When your people go to war against their enemies, wherever you send them, and when they pray to the Lord towards the city you have chosen and the temple I have built for your Name,⁴⁵ then hear from heaven their prayer and their plea, and uphold their cause.

⁴⁶ ‘When they sin against you – for there is no one who does not sin – and you become angry with them and give them over to their enemies, who take them captive to their own lands, far away or near;⁴⁷ and if they have a change of heart in the land where they are held captive, and repent and plead with you in the land of their captors and say, “We have sinned, we have done wrong, we have acted wickedly”;⁴⁸ and if they turn back to you with all their heart and soul in the land of their enemies who took them captive, and pray to you towards the land you gave their ancestors, towards the city you have chosen and the temple I have built for your Name;⁴⁹ then from heaven, your dwelling-place, hear their prayer and their plea, and uphold their cause.⁵⁰ And forgive your people, who have sinned against you; forgive all the offences they have committed against you, and cause their captors to show them mercy;⁵¹ for they are your people and your inheritance, whom you brought out of Egypt, out of that iron-smelting furnace.

⁵² ‘May your eyes be open to your servant’s plea and to the plea of your people Israel, and may you listen to

them whenever they cry out to you.⁵³ For you singled them out from all the nations of the world to be your own inheritance, just as you declared through your servant Moses when you, Sovereign Lord, brought our ancestors out of Egypt.’

⁵⁴ When Solomon had finished all these prayers and supplications to the Lord, he rose from before the altar of the Lord, where he had been kneeling with his hands spread out towards heaven.⁵⁵ He stood and blessed the whole assembly of Israel in a loud voice, saying:

⁵⁶ ‘Praise be to the Lord, who has given rest to his people Israel just as he promised. Not one word has failed of all the good promises he gave through his servant Moses.⁵⁷ May the Lord our God be with us as he was with our ancestors; may he never leave us nor forsake us.⁵⁸ May he turn our hearts to him, to walk in obedience to him and keep the commands, decrees and laws he gave our ancestors.⁵⁹ And may these words of mine, which I have prayed before the Lord, be near to the Lord our God day and night, that he may uphold the cause of his servant and the cause of his people Israel according to each day’s need,⁶⁰ so that all the peoples of the earth may know that the Lord is God and that there is no other.⁶¹ And may your hearts be fully committed to the Lord our God, to live by his decrees and obey his commands, as at this time.’

⁶² Then the king and all Israel with him offered sacrifices before the Lord.⁶³ Solomon offered a sacrifice of fellowship offerings to the Lord: twenty-two thousand cattle and a hundred and twenty thousand sheep and goats. So the king and all the Israelites dedicated the temple of the Lord.

⁶⁴ On that same day the king consecrated the middle part of the courtyard in front of the temple of the Lord, and there he offered burnt offerings, grain offerings and the fat of the fellowship offerings, because the bronze altar that stood before the Lord was too small to hold the burnt offerings, the grain offerings and the fat of the fellowship offerings.

⁶⁵ So Solomon observed the festival at that time, and all Israel with him – a vast assembly, people from Lebo Hamath to the Wadi of Egypt. They celebrated it before the Lord our God for seven days and seven days more, fourteen days in all.⁶⁶ On the following day he sent the people away. They blessed the king and then went home, joyful and glad in heart for all the good things the Lord had done for his servant David and his people Israel.

9 When Solomon had finished building the temple of the Lord and the royal palace, and had achieved all he had desired to do,² the Lord appeared to him a second time, as he had appeared to him at Gibeon.³ The Lord said to him:

'I have heard the prayer and plea you have made before me; I have consecrated this temple, which you have built, by putting my Name there for ever. My eyes and my heart will always be there.

⁴As for you, if you walk before me faithfully with integrity of heart and uprightness, as David your father did, and do all I command and observe my decrees and laws, ⁵I will establish your royal throne over Israel for ever, as I promised David your father when I said, "You shall never fail to have a successor on the throne of Israel."

⁶But if you or your descendants turn away from me and do not observe the commands and decrees I have given you and go off to serve other gods and worship them, ⁷then I will cut off Israel from the land I have given them and will reject this temple I have consecrated for my Name. Israel will then become a byword and an object of ridicule among all peoples. ⁸This temple will become a heap of rubble. All who pass by will be appalled and will scoff and say, "Why has the Lord done such a thing to this land and to this temple?" ⁹People will answer, "Because they have forsaken the Lord their God, who brought their ancestors out of Egypt, and have embraced other gods, worshipping and serving them – that is why the Lord brought all this disaster on them."

¹⁰ At the end of twenty years, during which Solomon built these two buildings – the temple of the Lord and the royal palace – ¹¹King Solomon gave twenty towns in Galilee to Hiram king of Tyre, because Hiram had supplied him with all the cedar and juniper and gold he wanted. ¹²But when Hiram went from Tyre to see the towns that Solomon had given him, he was not pleased with them. ¹³'What kind of towns are these you have given me, my brother?' he asked. And he called them the Land of Kabul, a name they have to this day. ¹⁴Now Hiram had sent to the king 120 talents of gold.

¹⁵Here is the account of the forced labour King Solomon conscripted to build the Lord's temple, his own palace, the terraces, the wall of Jerusalem, and Hazor, Megiddo and Gezer. ¹⁶(Pharaoh king of Egypt had attacked and captured Gezer. He had set it on fire. He killed its Canaanite inhabitants and then gave it as a wedding gift to his daughter, Solomon's wife. ¹⁷And Solomon rebuilt Gezer.) He built up Lower Beth Horon, ¹⁸Baalath, and Tadmor in the desert, within his land, ¹⁹as well as all his store cities and the towns for his chariots and for his horses – whatever he desired to build in Jerusalem, in Lebanon and throughout all the territory he ruled.

²⁰There were still people left from the Amorites, Hittites, Perizzites, Hivites and Jebusites (these peoples were not Israelites). ²¹Solomon conscripted the descendants of all these peoples remaining in the land – whom the Israelites could not exterminate – to serve as slave labour, as it is to this day. ²²But Solomon did not make slaves of any of the Israelites; they were his fighting men, his government

officials, his officers, his captains, and the commanders of his chariots and charioteers. ²³They were also the chief officials in charge of Solomon's projects – 550 officials supervising those who did the work.

²⁴After Pharaoh's daughter had come up from the City of David to the palace Solomon had built for her, he constructed the terraces.

²⁵Three times a year Solomon sacrificed burnt offerings and fellowship offerings on the altar he had built for the Lord, burning incense before the Lord along with them, and so fulfilled the temple obligations.

²⁶King Solomon also built ships at Ezion Geber, which is near Elath in Edom, on the shore of the Red Sea. ²⁷And Hiram sent his men – sailors who knew the sea – to serve in the fleet with Solomon's men. ²⁸They sailed to Ophir and brought back 420 talents of gold, which they delivered to King Solomon.

Hope for yourself:

What hopeful truths are revealed in today's passage?

Hope for your three:

Look through the Psalm again, ask the Lord to reveal to you which verse is applicable for each of your three, maybe they are different verses, or maybe all the same. Pray for your three over these things.

Hope for the world:

Ask God to guide you in praying for your workplace, uni or school (or a setting you find yourself regularly in). Ask for God's wisdom for those in authority as they go about their work and decisions.

DAY 13

FRIDAY 13.12

WATCH IN HOPE



MICAH 5, 7

Micah 5

¹ Marshal your troops now, city of troops,
for a siege is laid against us.
They will strike Israel's ruler
on the cheek with a rod.

² 'But you, Bethlehem Ephrathah,
though you are small among the clans of Judah,
out of you will come for me
one who will be ruler over Israel,
whose origins are from of old,
from ancient times.'

³ Therefore Israel will be abandoned
until the time when she who is in labour bears a son,
and the rest of his brothers return
to join the Israelites.

⁴ He will stand and shepherd his flock
in the strength of the Lord,
in the majesty of the name of the Lord his God.
And they will live securely, for then his greatness
will reach to the ends of the earth.

⁵ And he will be our peace
when the Assyrians invade our land
and march through our fortresses.
We will raise against them seven shepherds,
even eight commanders,

⁶ who will rule the land of Assyria with the sword,
the land of Nimrod with drawn sword.
He will deliver us from the Assyrians
when they invade our land
and march across our borders.

⁷ The remnant of Jacob will be
in the midst of many peoples
like dew from the Lord,
like showers on the grass,
which do not wait for anyone
or depend on man.

⁸ The remnant of Jacob will be among the nations,
in the midst of many peoples,
like a lion among the beasts of the forest,
like a young lion among flocks of sheep,
which mauls and mangles as it goes,
and no one can rescue.

⁹ Your hand will be lifted up in triumph over your
enemies,
and all your foes will be destroyed.

¹⁰ 'In that day,' declares the Lord,
'I will destroy your horses from among you
and demolish your chariots.

¹¹ I will destroy the cities of your land
and tear down all your strongholds.

¹² I will destroy your witchcraft
and you will no longer cast spells.

¹³ I will destroy your idols
and your sacred stones from among you;
you will no longer bow down
to the work of your hands.

¹⁴ I will uproot from among you your Asherah poles
when I demolish your cities.

¹⁵ I will take vengeance in anger and wrath
on the nations that have not obeyed me.'

Micah 7

- ¹ What misery is mine!
 I am like one who gathers summer fruit
 at the gleaning of the vineyard;
 there is no cluster of grapes to eat,
 none of the early figs that I crave.
- ² The faithful have been swept from the land;
 not one upright person remains.
 Everyone lies in wait to shed blood;
 they hunt each other with nets.
- ³ Both hands are skilled in doing evil;
 the ruler demands gifts,
 the judge accepts bribes,
 the powerful dictate what they desire –
 they all conspire together.
- ⁴ The best of them is like a brier,
 the most upright worse than a thorn hedge.
 The day God visits you has come,
 the day your watchmen sound the alarm.
 Now is the time of your confusion.
- ⁵ Do not trust a neighbour;
 put no confidence in a friend.
 Even with the woman who lies in your embrace
 guard the words of your lips.
- ⁶ For a son dishonours his father,
 a daughter rises up against her mother,
 a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law –
 a man's enemies are the members of his own
 household.
- ⁷ But as for me, I watch in hope for the Lord,
 I wait for God my Saviour;
 my God will hear me.
- ⁸ Do not gloat over me, my enemy!
 Though I have fallen, I will rise.
 Though I sit in darkness,
 the Lord will be my light.
- ⁹ Because I have sinned against him,
 I will bear the Lord's wrath,
 until he pleads my case
 and upholds my cause.
 He will bring me out into the light;
 I will see his righteousness.
- ¹⁰ Then my enemy will see it
 and will be covered with shame,
 she who said to me,
 'Where is the Lord your God?'
 My eyes will see her downfall;
 even now she will be trampled underfoot
 like mire in the streets.
- ¹¹ The day for building your walls will come,
 the day for extending your boundaries.
- ¹² In that day people will come to you
 from Assyria and the cities of Egypt,
 even from Egypt to the Euphrates
 and from sea to sea
 and from mountain to mountain.
- ¹³ The earth will become desolate because of its
 inhabitants,
 as the result of their deeds.
- ¹⁴ Shepherd your people with your staff,
 the flock of your inheritance,
 which lives by itself in a forest,
 in fertile pasture-lands.
 Let them feed in Bashan and Gilead
 as in days long ago.
- ¹⁵ 'As in the days when you came out of Egypt,
 I will show them my wonders.'
- ¹⁶ Nations will see and be ashamed,
 deprived of all their power.
 They will put their hands over their mouths
 and their ears will become deaf.
- ¹⁷ They will lick dust like a snake,
 like creatures that crawl on the ground.
 They will come trembling out of their dens;
 they will turn in fear to the Lord our God
 and will be afraid of you.
- ¹⁸ Who is a God like you,
 who pardons sin and forgives the transgression
 of the remnant of his inheritance?
 You do not stay angry for ever
 but delight to show mercy.
- ¹⁹ You will again have compassion on us;
 you will tread our sins underfoot
 and hurl all our iniquities into the depths of the sea.
- ²⁰ You will be faithful to Jacob,
 and show love to Abraham,
 as you pledged on oath to our ancestors
 in days long ago.

Hope for yourself:

How does the Lord grant us compassion? List some examples to remind yourself.

Hope for your three:

Ask God to reveal to you how to reach out to your three today. Be open to any way He wants you to take action for your three. Is it a text? Email? A phone call? Or arranging to meet up for a coffee or meal?

Hope for the world:

Pray over the political leaders that have power in the world. Pray that God will convert them, just like how to transformed the apostle Paul on the road to Damascus (see Acts 9).

SATURDAY 14.12

Today can be a spare day to catch up from any days you've missed or meditate on a passage of scripture that really spoke to you from this past week.

Feel free to use this space to write a prayer, or you can draw or journal.

BUT AS FOR ME,
I *watch* IN HOPE FOR THE LORD
I *wait* FOR GOD MY SAVIOUR
MY GOD WILL HEAR ME

MICAH 7:7



This is not only a natural and cost effective way to decorate for Christmas, but it also provides a lovely aroma in your home! I love using whatever I can find for this activity, and it's a lot of fun to do with kids too!

You can use oranges for a classic decorative look, or you can go big with grapefruit slices; or a deeper shade of red with blood oranges, or use lemons for a more darker rustic caramelised colour, limes can also provide a touch of green for a festive look too!

It might take a while to do this, but if you start early in the morning—your whole home will smell lovely and festive the whole day long!

Things needed:

- 6-10 pieces of citrus (oranges, grapefruit, blood oranges, lemons or limes)
- Kitchen paper towel
- Whole cloves (optional)
- String, ribbon or jute cord (whatever you have on hand!)

Method:

1. Preheat your oven to 90 degrees celsius, (just before gas mark 1).
2. Slice your citrus into slices of about 3mm to 52mm thick (a little over about the thickness of a pound coin, or two of them stacked together)
3. Pat dry your slices with a kitchen paper towel.
4. You have the option of adding a few whole cloves into the citrus skin for extra aroma or for visual interest (the whites under the skin layer can hold the cloves well)
5. Put the slices on a baking tray that is lined with baking parchment paper and bake at 90 degrees celsius for 5-6 hours, making sure to set an alarm to check every hour.
6. Cool down on a drying rack.
7. You can leave it for the following day, or when dried and no longer hot, attach the dried citrus fruit on string or ribbon or jute cord. Make a small hole incision just under the skin, by the white layer before the flesh segment, tie a knot to secure. Cut enough string to make a loop so your single decoration can hang well.
8. If you want to make it into a garland, string it up with a longer strand of string, repeating the knotting to secure just under the skin and flesh segment, separating at hand-width in between each slice. Drape your garland with other greenery decorations, or on your tree, or across the window or even string it up vertically spiralling on a doorpost.

The citrus will continue to dry as it is hung, unless placed in a high-moisture area, and it's generally best to keep indoors and in a dry place. And it smells great! Look on pinterest or google for more ways to decorate dried fruit items! The possibilities are endless! –AW

WEEK 3

HOPE

& JOY

DAY 15

SUNDAY 15.12

HOPE & LIGHT

ISAIAH 9:1-7; 11:1-11
JEREMIAH 31:27-40

Isaiah 9:1-7

¹ Nevertheless, there will be no more gloom for those who were in distress. In the past he humbled the land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali, but in the future he will honour Galilee of the nations, by the Way of the Sea, beyond the Jordan –

² The people walking in darkness
have seen a great light;
on those living in the land of deep darkness
a light has dawned.

³ You have enlarged the nation
and increased their joy;
they rejoice before you
as people rejoice at the harvest,
as warriors rejoice
when dividing the plunder.

⁴ For as in the day of Midian's defeat,
you have shattered
the yoke that burdens them,
the bar across their shoulders,
the rod of their oppressor.

⁵ Every warrior's boot used in battle
and every garment rolled in blood
will be destined for burning,
will be fuel for the fire.

⁶ For to us a child is born,
to us a son is given,
and the government will be on his shoulders.
And he will be called

Wonderful Counsellor, Mighty God,
Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.

⁷ Of the greatness of his government and peace
there will be no end.

He will reign on David's throne
and over his kingdom,
establishing and upholding it
with justice and righteousness
from that time on and for ever.
The zeal of the Lord Almighty
will accomplish this.

Isaiah 11:1-11

¹ A shoot will come up from the stump of Jesse;
from his roots a Branch will bear fruit.

² The Spirit of the Lord will rest on him –
the Spirit of wisdom and of understanding,
the Spirit of counsel and of might,
the Spirit of the knowledge and fear of the Lord –

³ and he will delight in the fear of the Lord.

He will not judge by what he sees with his eyes,
or decide by what he hears with his ears;

⁴ but with righteousness he will judge the needy,
with justice he will give decisions for the poor of the
earth.

He will strike the earth with the rod of his mouth;
with the breath of his lips he will slay the wicked.

⁵ Righteousness will be his belt
and faithfulness the sash round his waist.

⁶ The wolf will live with the lamb,
the leopard will lie down with the goat,
the calf and the lion and the yearling together;
and a little child will lead them.

⁷ The cow will feed with the bear,
their young will lie down together,
and the lion will eat straw like the ox.

⁸ The infant will play near the cobra's den,
and the young child will put its hand into the viper's
nest.

⁹ They will neither harm nor destroy
on all my holy mountain,
for the earth will be filled with the knowledge of the Lord
as the waters cover the sea.

¹⁰ In that day the Root of Jesse will stand as a banner
for the peoples; the nations will rally to him, and his
resting-place will be glorious. ¹¹ In that day the Lord
will reach out his hand a second time to reclaim the
surviving remnant of his people from Assyria, from
Lower Egypt, from Upper Egypt, from Cush, from Elam,
from Babylonia, from Hamath and from the islands of
the Mediterranean.

Jeremiah 31:27-40

²⁷ 'The days are coming,' declares the Lord, 'when I will
plant the kingdoms of Israel and Judah with the offspring
of people and of animals. ²⁸ Just as I watched over them
to uproot and tear down, and to overthrow, destroy and
bring disaster, so I will watch over them to build and to
plant,' declares the Lord. ²⁹ 'In those days people will no
longer say,

"The parents have eaten sour grapes,
and the children's teeth are set on edge."

³⁰ Instead, everyone will die for their own sin; whoever
eats sour grapes – their own teeth will be set on edge.

³¹ 'The days are coming,' declares the Lord,
'when I will make a new covenant
with the people of Israel
and with the people of Judah.

³² It will not be like the covenant
I made with their ancestors
when I took them by the hand
to lead them out of Egypt,
because they broke my covenant,
though I was a husband to them,'
declares the Lord.

³³ 'This is the covenant that I will make with the people
of Israel
after that time,' declares the Lord.

'I will put my law in their minds
and write it on their hearts.
I will be their God,

and they will be my people.
³⁴ No longer will they teach their neighbour,
or say to one another, "Know the Lord,"
because they will all know me,
from the least of them to the greatest,'
declares the Lord.

'For I will forgive their wickedness
and will remember their sins no more.'

³⁵ This is what the Lord says,

he who appoints the sun
to shine by day,
who decrees the moon and stars
to shine by night,
who stirs up the sea
so that its waves roar –
the Lord Almighty is his name:

³⁶ 'Only if these decrees vanish from my sight,'
declares the Lord,

‘will Israel ever cease
being a nation before me.’

³⁷ This is what the Lord says:

‘Only if the heavens above can be measured
and the foundations of the earth below be searched out
will I reject all the descendants of Israel
because of all they have done,’
declares the Lord.

³⁸ ‘The days are coming,’ declares the Lord, ‘when this city will be rebuilt for me from the Tower of Hananel to the Corner Gate. ³⁹ The measuring line will stretch from there straight to the hill of Gareb and then turn to Goah. ⁴⁰ The whole valley where dead bodies and ashes are thrown, and all the terraces out to the Kidron Valley on the east as far as the corner of the Horse Gate, will be holy to the Lord. The city will never again be uprooted or demolished.’

Hope for yourself:

How has God set you free from the darkness? What are some hopeful points to draw from today’s passages?

Hope for your three:

Pray that God would grant your three a beacon of light and hope during their dark moments.

Hope for the world:

What’s something our church can be actively praying over outside of our four walls?

SAVING HOPE

ISAIAH 52-53

Isaiah 52

¹ Awake, awake, Zion,
 clothe yourself with strength!
 Put on your garments of splendour,
 Jerusalem, the holy city.
 The uncircumcised and defiled
 will not enter you again.
² Shake off your dust;
 rise up, sit enthroned, Jerusalem.
 Free yourself from the chains on your neck,
 Daughter Zion, now a captive.
³ For this is what the Lord says:
 'You were sold for nothing,
 and without money you will be redeemed.'
⁴ For this is what the Sovereign Lord says:
 'At first my people went down to Egypt to live;
 lately, Assyria has oppressed them.
⁵ 'And now what do I have here?' declares the Lord.
 'For my people have been taken away for nothing,
 and those who rule them mock,'
 declares the Lord.
 'And all day long
 my name is constantly blasphemed.
⁶ Therefore my people will know my name;
 therefore in that day they will know
 that it is I who foretold it.
 Yes, it is I.'
⁷ How beautiful on the mountains
 are the feet of those who bring good news,
 who proclaim peace,

who bring good tidings,
 who proclaim salvation,
 who say to Zion,
 'Your God reigns!'
⁸ Listen! Your watchmen lift up their voices;
 together they shout for joy.
 When the Lord returns to Zion,
 they will see it with their own eyes.
⁹ Burst into songs of joy together,
 you ruins of Jerusalem,
 for the Lord has comforted his people,
 he has redeemed Jerusalem.
¹⁰ The Lord will lay bare his holy arm
 in the sight of all the nations,
 and all the ends of the earth will see
 the salvation of our God.
¹¹ Depart, depart, go out from there!
 Touch no unclean thing!
 Come out from it and be pure,
 you who carry the articles of the Lord's house.
¹² But you will not leave in haste
 or go in flight;
 for the Lord will go before you,
 the God of Israel will be your rear guard.
¹³ See, my servant will act wisely;
 he will be raised and lifted up and highly exalted.
¹⁴ Just as there were many who were appalled at him –
 his appearance was so disfigured beyond that of any
 human being
 and his form marred beyond human likeness –
¹⁵ so he will sprinkle many nations,
 and kings will shut their mouths because of him.
 For what they were not told, they will see,
 and what they have not heard, they will understand.

Isaiah 53

¹ Who has believed our message
and to whom has the arm of the Lord been revealed?

² He 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.

³ He 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.

⁴ Surely he took up our pain
and bore our suffering,
yet we considered him punished by God,
stricken by him, and afflicted.

⁵ But 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.

⁶ We 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.

⁷ He 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.

⁸ By oppression 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.

⁹ He 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.

¹⁰ Yet it was the Lord's will to crush him and cause him
to suffer,

and though the Lord makes his life an offering for sin,
he will see his offspring and prolong his days,
and the will of the Lord will prosper in his hand.

¹¹ After he has suffered,
he will see the light of life and be satisfied;
by his knowledge my righteous servant will justify many,
and he will bear their iniquities.

¹² Therefore I will give him a portion among the great,
and he will divide the spoils with the strong,
because he poured out his life unto death,
and was numbered with the transgressors.

For he bore the sin of many,
and made intercession for the transgressors.

Hope for yourself:

What are some key highlights from today's
passage that give you hope? Why?

Hope for your three:

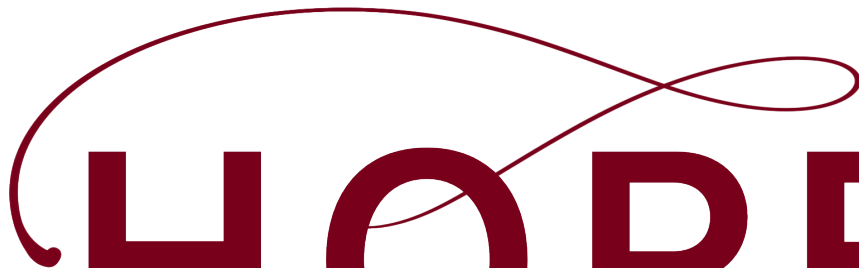
Pray for God to reveal to you how to pray
for your three regarding their struggles and
sufferings.

Hope for the world:

Ask God to guide you in prayer concerning
communities that are being persecuted for
their faith in Christ. Look up how to pray via
online resources found on "Open Doors"

DAY 17

TUESDAY 17.12



HOPE

IN THE HOLY ONE

ISAIAH 60-61

Isaiah 60

¹ 'Arise, shine, for your light has come,
and the glory of the Lord rises upon you.

² See, darkness covers the earth
and thick darkness is over the peoples,
but the Lord rises upon you
and his glory appears over you.

³ Nations will come to your light,
and kings to the brightness of your dawn.

⁴ 'Lift up your eyes and look about you:
all assemble and come to you;
your sons come from afar,
and your daughters are carried on the hip.

⁵ Then you will look and be radiant,
your heart will throb and swell with joy;
the wealth on the seas will be brought to you,
to you the riches of the nations will come.

⁶ Herds of camels will cover your land,
young camels of Midian and Ephah.
And all from Sheba will come,
bearing gold and incense
and proclaiming the praise of the Lord.

⁷ All Kedar's flocks will be gathered to you,
the rams of Nebaioth will serve you;
they will be accepted as offerings on my altar,
and I will adorn my glorious temple.

⁸ 'Who are these that fly along like clouds,
like doves to their nests?

⁹ Surely the islands look to me;
in the lead are the ships of Tarshish,
bringing your children from afar,
with their silver and gold,
to the honour of the Lord your God,
the Holy One of Israel,
for he has endowed you with splendour.

¹⁰ 'Foreigners will rebuild your walls,
and their kings will serve you.
Though in anger I struck you,
in favour I will show you compassion.

¹¹ Your gates will always stand open,
they will never be shut, day or night,
so that people may bring you the wealth of the nations –
their kings led in triumphal procession.

¹² For the nation or kingdom that will not serve you will
perish;
it will be utterly ruined.

¹³ 'The glory of Lebanon will come to you,
the juniper, the fir and the cypress together,
to adorn my sanctuary;
and I will glorify the place for my feet.

¹⁴ The children of your oppressors will come bowing before you;

all who despise you will bow down at your feet
and will call you the City of the Lord,
Zion of the Holy One of Israel.

¹⁵ 'Although you have been forsaken and hated,
with no one travelling through,

I will make you the everlasting pride
and the joy of all generations.

¹⁶ You will drink the milk of nations
and be nursed at royal breasts.

Then you will know that I, the Lord, am your Saviour,
your Redeemer, the Mighty One of Jacob.

¹⁷ Instead of bronze I will bring you gold,
and silver in place of iron.

Instead of wood I will bring you bronze,
and iron in place of stones.

I will make peace your governor
and well-being your ruler.

¹⁸ No longer will violence be heard in your land,
nor ruin or destruction within your borders,
but you will call your walls Salvation
and your gates Praise.

¹⁹ The sun will no more be your light by day,
nor will the brightness of the moon shine on you,
for the Lord will be your everlasting light,
and your God will be your glory.

²⁰ Your sun will never set again,
and your moon will wane no more;
the Lord will be your everlasting light,
and your days of sorrow will end.

²¹ Then all your people will be righteous
and they will possess the land for ever.
They are the shoot I have planted,
the work of my hands,
for the display of my splendour.

²² The least of you will become a thousand,
the smallest a mighty nation.

I am the Lord;
in its time I will do this swiftly'

Isaiah 61

¹ The Spirit of the Sovereign Lord is on me,
because the Lord has anointed me
to proclaim good news to the poor.

He has sent me to bind up the broken-hearted,
to proclaim freedom for the captives
and release from darkness for the prisoners,

² to proclaim the year of the Lord's favour
and the day of vengeance of our God,
to comfort all who mourn,

³ and provide for those who grieve in Zion –
to bestow on them a crown of beauty
instead of ashes,

the oil of joy
instead of mourning,
and a garment of praise
instead of a spirit of despair.

They will be called oaks of righteousness,
a planting of the Lord
for the display of his splendour.

⁴ They will rebuild the ancient ruins
and restore the places long devastated;
they will renew the ruined cities
that have been devastated for generations.

⁵ Strangers will shepherd your flocks;
foreigners will work your fields and vineyards.

⁶ And you will be called priests of the Lord,
you will be named ministers of our God.

You will feed on the wealth of nations,
and in their riches you will boast.

⁷ Instead of your shame
you will receive a double portion,
and instead of disgrace
you will rejoice in your inheritance.

And so you will inherit a double portion in your land,
and everlasting joy will be yours.

⁸ 'For I, the Lord, love justice;
I hate robbery and wrongdoing.

In my faithfulness I will reward my people
and make an everlasting covenant with them.

⁹ Their descendants will be known among the nations
and their offspring among the peoples.

All who see them will acknowledge
that they are a people the Lord has blessed.'

¹⁰ I delight greatly in the Lord;
my soul rejoices in my God.

For he has clothed me with garments of salvation
and arrayed me in a robe of his righteousness,
as a bridegroom adorns his head like a priest,
and as a bride adorns herself with her jewels.

¹¹ For as the soil makes the young plant come up
and a garden causes seeds to grow,
so the Sovereign Lord will make righteousness
and praise spring up before all nations.

Hope for yourself:

How is Jesus holy from these passages? How can this truth remind us to be hopeful?

Hope for your three:

Pray for the Sovereign Lord to reveal Himself to your three today. Use a word or phrase from the passage to pray over them with.

Hope for the world:

Pray for a struggling country that the Lord has prompted you to pray over.

FORGOTTEN PEOPLE

LUKE 1

Luke 1

¹ Many have undertaken to draw up an account of the things that have been fulfilled among us, ² just as they were handed down to us by those who from the first were eyewitnesses and servants of the word. ³ With this in mind, since I myself have carefully investigated everything from the beginning, I too decided to write an orderly account for you, most excellent Theophilus, ⁴ so that you may know the certainty of the things you have been taught.

⁵ In the time of Herod king of Judea there was a priest named Zechariah, who belonged to the priestly division of Abijah; his wife Elizabeth was also a descendant of Aaron. ⁶ Both of them were righteous in the sight of God, observing all the Lord's commands and decrees blamelessly. ⁷ But they were childless because Elizabeth was not able to conceive, and they were both very old.

⁸ Once when Zechariah's division was on duty and he was serving as priest before God, ⁹ he was chosen by lot, according to the custom of the priesthood, to go into the temple of the Lord and burn incense. ¹⁰ And when the time for the burning of incense came, all the assembled worshipers were praying outside.

¹¹ Then an angel of the Lord appeared to him, standing at the right side of the altar of incense. ¹² When Zechariah saw him, he was startled and was gripped with fear. ¹³ But the angel said to him: "Do not be afraid, Zechariah; your prayer has been heard. Your wife Elizabeth will bear you a son, and you are to call him John. ¹⁴ He will be a joy and delight to you, and many will rejoice because of his birth, ¹⁵ for he will be great in the sight of the Lord. He is never to take wine or other fermented drink, and he will be filled with the Holy Spirit even before he is born. ¹⁶ He will bring back many of the people of Israel to the Lord their God. ¹⁷ And he will go on before the Lord, in the spirit and power of Elijah, to turn the hearts of the parents to their children and the disobedient to the wisdom of the righteous—to make ready a people prepared for the Lord."

¹⁸ Zechariah asked the angel, "How can I be sure of this? I am an old man and my wife is well along in years."

¹⁹ The angel said to him, "I am Gabriel. I stand in the presence of God, and I have been sent to speak to you and to tell you this good news.

²⁰ And now you will be silent and not able to speak until the day this happens, because you did not believe my words, which will come true at their appointed time."

²¹ Meanwhile, the people were waiting for Zechariah and wondering why he stayed so long in the temple. ²² When he came out, he could not speak to them. They realized he had seen a vision in the temple, for he kept making signs to them but remained unable to speak.

²³ When his time of service was completed, he returned home. ²⁴ After this his wife Elizabeth became pregnant and for five months remained in seclusion. ²⁵ "The Lord has done this for me," she said. "In these days he has shown his favor and taken away my disgrace among the people."

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

²⁹ Mary was greatly troubled at his words and wondered what kind of greeting this might be. ³⁰ But the angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary; you have found favor with God. ³¹ You will conceive and give birth to a son, and you are to call him Jesus. ³² He 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, ³³ and 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?"

³⁵ The 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 the Son of God. ³⁶ Even 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. ³⁷ For 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.

³⁹ At that time Mary got ready and hurried to a town in the hill country of Judea, ⁴⁰ where she entered Zechariah's home and greeted Elizabeth. ⁴¹ When Elizabeth heard Mary's greeting, the baby leaped in her womb, and Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit. ⁴² In a loud voice she exclaimed: "Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the child you will bear! ⁴³ But why am I so favored, that the mother of my Lord should come to me? ⁴⁴ As soon as the sound of your greeting reached my ears, the baby in my womb leaped for joy. ⁴⁵ Blessed is she who has believed that the Lord would fulfill his promises to her!"

⁴⁶ And Mary said:

"My soul glorifies the Lord

⁴⁷ and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior,

⁴⁸ for he has been mindful
of the humble state of his servant.

From now on all generations will call me blessed,

⁴⁹ for the Mighty One has done great things for me—
holy is his name.

⁵⁰ His mercy extends to those who fear him,
from generation to generation.

⁵¹ He has performed mighty deeds with his arm;
he has scattered those who are proud in their inmost thoughts.

⁵² He has brought down rulers from their thrones
but has lifted up the humble.

⁵³ He has filled the hungry with good things
but has sent the rich away empty.

⁵⁴ He has helped his servant Israel,
remembering to be merciful

⁵⁵ to Abraham and his descendants forever,
just as he promised our ancestors."

⁵⁶ Mary stayed with Elizabeth for about three months
and then returned home.

⁵⁷ When it was time for Elizabeth to have her baby,
she gave birth to a son. ⁵⁸ Her neighbors and relatives
heard that the Lord had shown her great mercy, and
they shared her joy.

⁵⁹ On the eighth day they came to circumcise the child,
and they were going to name him after his father
Zechariah, ⁶⁰ but his mother spoke up and said, "No!
He is to be called John."

⁶¹ They said to her, "There is no one among your
relatives who has that name."

⁶² Then they made signs to his father, to find out
what he would like to name the child. ⁶³ He asked for
a writing tablet, and to everyone's astonishment he
wrote, "His name is John." ⁶⁴ Immediately his mouth
was opened and his tongue set free, and he began to
speak, praising God. ⁶⁵ All the neighbors were filled
with awe, and throughout the hill country of Judea
people were talking about all these things. ⁶⁶ Everyone
who heard this wondered about it, asking, "What then
is this child going to be?" For the Lord's hand was with
him.

⁶⁷ His father Zechariah was filled with the Holy Spirit
and prophesied:

⁶⁸ "Praise be to the Lord, the God of Israel,
because he has come to his people and redeemed
them.

⁶⁹ He has raised up a horn of salvation for us
in the house of his servant David

⁷⁰ (as he said through his holy prophets of long ago),

⁷¹ salvation from our enemies
and from the hand of all who hate us—

⁷² to show mercy to our ancestors
and to remember his holy covenant,

⁷³ the oath he swore to our father Abraham:

⁷⁴ to rescue us from the hand of our enemies,
and to enable us to serve him without fear

⁷⁵ in holiness and righteousness before him all our
days.

⁷⁶ And you, my child, will be called a prophet of the
Most High;

for you will go on before the Lord to prepare the way for him,
⁷⁷ to give his people the knowledge of salvation
through the forgiveness of their sins,
⁷⁸ because of the tender mercy of our God,
by which the rising sun will come to us from heaven
⁷⁹ to shine on those living in darkness
and in the shadow of death,
to guide our feet into the path of peace.”

⁸⁰ And the child grew and became strong in spirit; and he lived in the wilderness until he appeared publicly to Israel.

Hope for yourself:

What’s something that surprised you from today’s passage?

Hope for your three:

Pray for God to surprise your three with something unique and special.

Hope for the world:

Ask the Lord to prompt you to pray over a particular group of people that might be hiding in the dark. Ask for God’s light to be revealed in their lives so they may walk freely in His light.

DAY 19

THURSDAY 19.12

HOPEful MESSENGER OF HOPE

MATTHEW 3:1-12, MARK 1:1-8, JOHN 1:19-28

Matthew 3:1-12

¹ In those days John the Baptist came, preaching in the wilderness of Judea ² and saying, 'Repent, for the kingdom of heaven has come near.' ³ This is he who was spoken of through the prophet Isaiah:

'A voice of one calling in the wilderness,
"Prepare the way for the Lord,
make straight paths for him."'

⁴ John's clothes were made of camel's hair, and he had a leather belt round his waist. His food was locusts and wild honey. ⁵ People went out to him from Jerusalem and all Judea and the whole region of the Jordan. ⁶ Confessing their sins, they were baptised by him in the River Jordan.

⁷ But when he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees coming to where he was baptising, he said to them: 'You brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the coming wrath? ⁸ Produce fruit in keeping with repentance. ⁹ And do not think you can say to yourselves, "We have Abraham as our father." I tell you that out of these stones God can raise up children for Abraham. ¹⁰ The axe has been laid to the root of the trees, and every tree that does not produce good fruit will be cut down and thrown into the fire.

¹¹ 'I baptise you with water for repentance. But after me comes one who is more powerful than I, whose sandals I am not worthy to carry. He will baptise you with the Holy Spirit and fire. ¹² His winnowing fork is in his hand, and he will clear his threshing-floor, gathering his wheat into the barn and burning up the chaff with unquenchable fire.'

Mark 1:1-8

¹ The beginning of the good news about Jesus the Messiah, the Son of God, ² as it is written in Isaiah the prophet:

‘I will send my messenger ahead of you,
who will prepare your way’ –
³ ‘a voice of one calling in the wilderness,
“Prepare the way for the Lord,
make straight paths for him.”’

⁴ And so John the Baptist appeared in the wilderness, preaching a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. ⁵ The whole Judean countryside and all the people of Jerusalem went out to him. Confessing their sins, they were baptised by him in the River Jordan. ⁶ John wore clothing made of camel’s hair, with a leather belt round his waist, and he ate locusts and wild honey. ⁷ And this was his message: ‘After me comes the one more powerful than I, the straps of whose sandals I am not worthy to stoop down and untie. ⁸ I baptise you with water, but he will baptise you with the Holy Spirit.’

John 1:19-28

¹⁹ Now this was John’s testimony when the Jewish leaders in Jerusalem sent priests and Levites to ask him who he was. ²⁰ He did not fail to confess, but confessed freely, ‘I am not the Messiah.’

²¹ They asked him, ‘Then who are you? Are you Elijah?’

He said, ‘I am not.’

‘Are you the Prophet?’

He answered, ‘No.’

²² Finally they said, ‘Who are you? Give us an answer to take back to those who sent us. What do you say about yourself?’

²³ John replied in the words of Isaiah the prophet, ‘I am the voice of one calling in the wilderness, “Make straight the way for the Lord.”’

²⁴ Now the Pharisees who had been sent ²⁵ questioned him, ‘Why then do you baptise if you are not the Messiah, nor Elijah, nor the Prophet?’

²⁶ ‘I baptise with water,’ John replied, ‘but among you stands one you do not know. ²⁷ He is the one who comes after me, the straps of whose sandals I am not worthy to untie.’

²⁸ This all happened at Bethany on the other side of the Jordan, where John was baptising.

Hope for yourself:

What is the message of hope for you today?

Hope for your three:

Pray for your three to experience hope and renewal

Hope for the world:

What’s your prayer and hope for future generations overseas?

HOPE IS HERE

LUKE 2:1-21; MATTHEW 2:1-23

Luke 2:1-21

¹ 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 Quirinius was governor of Syria.) ³ And everyone went to their own town to register.

⁴ So Joseph also went up from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to Judea, to Bethlehem the town of David, because he belonged to the house and line of David. ⁵ He went there to register with Mary, who was pledged to be married to him and was expecting a child. ⁶ While they were there, the time came for the baby to be born, ⁷ and she gave birth to her firstborn, a son. She wrapped him in cloths and placed him in a manger, because there was no guest room available for them.

⁸ And there were shepherds living out in the fields near by, keeping watch over their flocks at night. ⁹ An angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified.

¹⁰ But the angel said to them, 'Do not be afraid. I bring you good news that will cause great joy for all the people. ¹¹ Today in the town of David a Saviour has been born to you; he is the Messiah, the Lord. ¹² This will be a sign to you: you will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger.'

¹³ Suddenly 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 favour rests.'

¹⁵ When 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.'

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

²¹ On the eighth day, when it was time to circumcise the child, he was named Jesus, the name the angel had given him before he was conceived.

Matthew 2:1-23

¹ After Jesus was born in Bethlehem in Judea, during the time of King Herod, Magi from the east came to Jerusalem ² and 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.'

³ When King Herod heard this he was disturbed, and all Jerusalem with him. ⁴ When 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:

"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."

⁷ Then Herod called the Magi secretly and found out from them the exact time the star had appeared. ⁸ He 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.'

⁹ After 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.

¹⁰ When they saw the star, they were overjoyed. ¹¹ On coming to the house, they saw the child with his mother Mary, and they bowed down and worshipped him. Then they opened their treasures and presented him with gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh. ¹² And having been warned in a dream not to go back to Herod, they returned to their country by another route.

¹³ When they had gone, an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream. 'Get up,' he said, 'take the child and his mother and escape to Egypt. Stay there until I tell you, for Herod is going to search for the child to kill him.'

¹⁴ So he got up, took the child and his mother during the night and left for Egypt, ¹⁵ where he stayed until the death of Herod. And so was fulfilled what the Lord had said through the prophet: 'Out of Egypt I called my son.'

¹⁶ When Herod realised that he had been outwitted by the Magi, he was furious, and he gave orders to kill all the boys in Bethlehem and its vicinity who were two years old and under, in accordance with the time he had learned from the Magi. ¹⁷ Then what was said through the prophet Jeremiah was fulfilled:

¹⁸ 'A voice is heard in Ramah,
weeping and great mourning,
Rachel weeping for her children
and refusing to be comforted,
because they are no more.'

¹⁹ After Herod died, an angel of the Lord appeared in a dream to Joseph in Egypt ²⁰ and said, 'Get up, take the child and his mother and go to the land of Israel, for those who were trying to take the child's life are dead.'

²¹ So he got up, took the child and his mother and went to the land of Israel. ²² But when he heard that Archelaus was reigning in Judea in place of his father Herod, he was afraid to go there. Having been warned in a dream, he withdrew to the district of Galilee, ²³ and he went and lived in a town called Nazareth. So was fulfilled what was said through the prophets, that he would be called a Nazarene.

Hope for yourself:

What's one word or sentence from today's passages that really stood out to you? Why? How is Christ our ultimate hope, as mentioned in these passages?

Hope for your three:

Pray for your three and consider how they may be weeping and mourning. Ask the Lord to comfort them and grant them a hope and a peace rooted in Him.

Hope for the world:

Pray for those in countries that have experienced destruction and heartache either through man-made methods or natural disaster.

SATURDAY 21.12

Today can be a spare day to catch up from any days you've missed or meditate on a passage of scripture that really spoke to you from this past week.

Feel free to use this space to write a prayer, or you can draw or journal.

Praise BE TO THE LORD,
THE GOD OF ISRAEL,
BECAUSE HE HAS COME TO
HIS PEOPLE AND REDEEMED THEM.

LUKE 1:68



PHAN'S CHRISTMAS PUNCH

Here's a special Christmas drink for all to enjoy! Cheers to Phan for this contribution! Clink clink!

Ingredients

- 300ml orange juice
- 1 litre cranberry juice
- 700ml lemonade
- 150g cranberries
- 1 Cinnamon stick
- Teaspoon of cloves
- Mint
- Rosemary
- Orange and lime to garnish

Method

1. Pour the orange juice, cranberry juice and cranberries into a large jug or bowl.
2. Add the cinnamon stick, cloves, mint and rosemary. Let it infuse for 1 hour while you listen to some Christmas songs and write those cards.
3. Strain or scoop out all the aromatics. Then, add the lemonade for that sherbet fizz.
4. Garnish with some springs of rosemary, mint, orange and lime slices. Serve with Christmas lunch or your favourite festive snacks. Cheers!

You can also substitute cranberries for blueberries! Enjoy!

- Phan Han

HOPE

AND

LOVE

DAY 22

SUNDAY 22.12

A JOYFUL HOPEful SOUND

PSALMS 98

Psalm 98

- ¹ Sing to the Lord a new song,
for he has done marvellous things;
his right hand and his holy arm
have worked salvation for him.
- ² The Lord has made his salvation known
and revealed his righteousness to the nations.
- ³ He has remembered his love
and his faithfulness to Israel;
all the ends of the earth have seen
the salvation of our God.
- ⁴ Shout for joy to the Lord, all the earth,
burst into jubilant song with music;
- ⁵ make music to the Lord with the harp,
with the harp and the sound of singing,
- ⁶ with trumpets and the blast of the ram's horn –
shout for joy before the Lord, the King.
- ⁷ Let the sea resound, and everything in it,
the world, and all who live in it.
- ⁸ Let the rivers clap their hands,
let the mountains sing together for joy;
- ⁹ let them sing before the Lord,
for he comes to judge the earth.
He will judge the world in righteousness
and the peoples with equity.

Hope for yourself:

What's something you have highlighted in
today's Psalm? Why?

What's a joyful worship song you've recently
discovered or have been listening to a lot?
Why? What do the lyrics say? (Why not listen
to it also!)

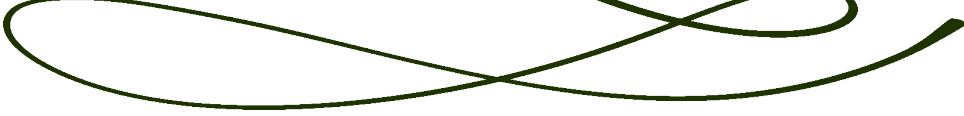
Hope for your three:

Read over the Psalm again, is there a particular
word that stands out to you concerning your
three? Pray that over them.

Hope for the world:

Find a piece of news that's positive and
hopeful, a newsworthy story that reminds you
there is hope evident in the world. Give thanks
to God for this and praise him.

HIGHEST HOPE



HEBREWS 1

Hebrews 1

¹ In the past God spoke to our ancestors through the prophets at many times and in various ways, ² but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed heir of all things, and through whom also he made the universe. ³ The Son is the radiance of God's glory and the exact representation of his being, sustaining all things by his powerful word. After he had provided purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty in heaven. ⁴ So he became as much superior to the angels as the name he has inherited is superior to theirs.

⁵ For to which of the angels did God ever say,

'You are my Son;
today I have become your Father'?

Or again,

'I will be his Father,
and he will be my Son'?

⁶ And again, when God brings his firstborn into the world, he says,

'Let all God's angels worship him.'

⁷ In speaking of the angels he says,
'He makes his angels spirits,
and his servants flames of fire.'

⁸ But about the Son he says,

'Your throne, O God, will last for ever and ever;
a sceptre of justice will be the sceptre of your kingdom.

⁹ You have loved righteousness and hated wickedness;
therefore God, your God, has set you above your companions
by anointing you with the oil of joy.'

¹⁰ He also says,

'In the beginning, Lord, you laid the foundations of the earth,
and the heavens are the work of your hands.

¹¹ They will perish, but you remain;
they will all wear out like a garment.

¹² You will roll them up like a robe;
like a garment they will be changed.

But you remain the same,
and your years will never end.'

¹³ To which of the angels did God ever say,

'Sit at my right hand
until I make your enemies
a footstool for your feet'?

¹⁴ Are not all angels ministering spirits sent to serve those who will inherit salvation?

Colossians 1:15-20

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.

Hope for yourself:

How is Christ our highest and ultimate hope?
In which areas do you lack hope? List them and pray over them.

Hope for your three:

Ask God to reveal to you something your three need hope and faith over. Pray over this.

Hope for the world:

Turn on your TV and watch the news. What is something to pray over? Ask God to send hope and aid to those suffering.

HUMILITY & HOPE

PHILIPPIANS 2:1-11, JOHN 13:1-17

Philippians 2:1-11

¹ Therefore if you have any encouragement from being united with Christ, if any comfort from his love, if any common sharing in the Spirit, if any tenderness and compassion, ² then make my joy complete by being like-minded, having the same love, being one in spirit and of one mind. ³ Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. Rather, in humility value others above yourselves, ⁴ not looking to your own interests but each of you to the interests of the others.

⁵ In your relationships with one another, have the same mindset as Christ Jesus:

⁶ who, being in very nature God,
did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage;

⁷ rather, he made himself nothing
by taking the very nature of a servant,
being made in human likeness.

⁸ And being found in appearance as a man,
he humbled himself
by becoming obedient to death –
even death on a cross!

⁹ Therefore God exalted him to the highest place
and gave him the name that is above every name,

¹⁰ that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow,
in heaven and on earth and under the earth,

¹¹ and every tongue acknowledge that Jesus Christ is Lord,
to the glory of God the Father

John 13:1-17

¹ It was just before the Passover Festival. Jesus knew that the hour had come for him to leave this world and go to the Father. Having loved his own who were in the world, he loved them to the end.

² The evening meal was in progress, and the devil had already prompted Judas, the son of Simon Iscariot, to betray Jesus. ³ Jesus knew that the Father had put all things under his power, and that he had come from God and was returning to God; ⁴ so he got up from the meal, took off his outer clothing, and wrapped a towel round his waist. ⁵ After that, he poured water into a basin and began to wash his disciples' feet, drying them with the towel that was wrapped round him.

⁶ He came to Simon Peter, who said to him, 'Lord, are you going to wash my feet?'

⁷ Jesus replied, 'You do not realise now what I am doing, but later you will understand.'

⁸ 'No,' said Peter, 'you shall never wash my feet.'

Jesus answered, 'Unless I wash you, you have no part with me.'

⁹ 'Then, Lord,' Simon Peter replied, 'not just my feet but my hands and my head as well!'

¹⁰ Jesus answered, 'Those who have had a bath need only to wash their feet; their whole body is clean. And you are clean, though not every one of you.' ¹¹ For he knew who was going to betray him, and that was why he said not every one was clean.

¹² When he had finished washing their feet, he put on his clothes and returned to his place. 'Do you understand what I have done for you?' he asked them. ¹³ 'You call me "Teacher" and "Lord", and rightly so, for that is what I am. ¹⁴ Now that I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also should wash one another's feet. ¹⁵ I have set you an example that you should do as I have done for you. ¹⁶ Very truly I tell you, no servant is greater than his master, nor is a messenger greater than the one who sent him. ¹⁷ Now that you know these things, you will be blessed if you do them.

Hope for yourself:

What's a hopeful point drawn from today's passage that encourages you?

What about some challenging points? Why do you think this is a challenge?

Hope for your three:

In what ways can God use us to demonstrate love to your three? Pray for them. Pray that God would grant us the ability and wisdom to love them well.

Hope for the world:

Ask the Lord to reveal to you a country you have visited before, but needs His revival and healing power over that land. Pray for the people and the churches and the missionaries there.

THE BIRTH OF *Eternal* HOPE

1 JOHN 4:7-21, ROMANS 5:3-5, 1 CORINTHIANS 13

1 John 4:7-21

⁷ Dear friends, let us love one another, for love comes from God. Everyone who loves has been born of God and knows God. ⁸ Whoever does not love does not know God, because God is love. ⁹ This is how God showed his love among us: he sent his one and only Son into the world that we might live through him. ¹⁰ This is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins. ¹¹ Dear friends, since God so loved us, we also ought to love one another. ¹² No one has ever seen God; but if we love one another, God lives in us and his love is made complete in us.

¹³ This is how we know that we live in him and he in us: he has given us of his Spirit. ¹⁴ And we have seen and testify that the Father has sent his Son to be the Saviour of the world. ¹⁵ If anyone acknowledges that Jesus is the Son of God, God lives in them and they in God. ¹⁶ And so we know and rely on the love God has for us.

God is love. Whoever lives in love lives in God, and God in them. ¹⁷ This is how love is made complete among us so that we will have confidence on the day of judgment: in this world we are like Jesus. ¹⁸ There is no fear in love. But perfect love drives out fear, because fear has to do with punishment. The one who fears is not made perfect in love.

¹⁹ We love because he first loved us. ²⁰ Whoever claims to love God yet hates a brother or sister is a liar. For whoever does not love their brother and sister, whom they have seen, cannot love God, whom they have not seen. ²¹ And he has given us this command: anyone who loves God must also love their brother and sister.

Romans 5:3-5

³ Not only so, but we also glory in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance; ⁴ perseverance, character; and character, hope. ⁵ And hope does not put us to shame, because God's love has been poured out into our hearts through the Holy Spirit, who has been given to us.

1 Corinthians 13

¹ If I speak in the tongues of men or of angels, but do not have love, I am only a resounding gong or a clanging cymbal. ² If I have the gift of prophecy and can fathom all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have a faith that can move mountains, but do not have love, I am nothing. ³ If I give all I possess to the poor and give over my body to hardship that I may boast, but do not have love, I gain nothing.

⁴ Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. ⁵ It does not dishonour others, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. ⁶ Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. ⁷ It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres.

⁸ Love never fails. But where there are prophecies, they will cease; where there are tongues, they will be stilled; where there is knowledge, it will pass away. ⁹ For we know in part and we prophesy in part, ¹⁰ but when completeness comes, what is in part disappears. ¹¹ When I was a child, I talked like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child. When I became a man, I put the ways of childhood behind me. ¹² For now we see only a reflection as in a mirror; then we shall see face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I am fully known.

¹³ And now these three remain: faith, hope and love. But the greatest of these is love.

Hope for yourself:

What is the key point to take note of from today? Look back at the start of the month and compare what hopes you wrote down: what became of those? How has the Lord revealed himself to you this past month?

Hope for your three:

How have your feelings and prayers changed concerning your three during this season of advent? Pray and give thanks to God about this.

Hope for the world:

What's something in the world that God has consistently been highlighting to you a lot about during this course? Spend some time praying over this.

THURSDAY 26.12

ANDREA'S CRANBERRY PISTACHIO BISCOTTI

Some of us have had the privilege of enjoying Biscotti from our dear sister and friend Andrea. And it's always a great accompaniment with a lovely hot beverage. We are grateful she has shared her Christmas version of this biscotti recipe with us all! May we get a chance to bake it this year, and then sit back with our feet up, and enjoy the biscotti with a lovely warm mugful of tea, coffee or hot cocoa (or the Christmas drink Phan shared with us!) What a special treat!

Ingredients:

- 4 tbsp olive oil
- 120g caster sugar
- 2 tsp vanilla extract
- 2 eggs
- 225g plain flour
- ¼ tsp salt
- 1 tsp baking powder
- 60g dried cranberry*
- 200g pistachio nuts*

Method

1. Preheat the oven to 180 degrees, gas mark 4. Line a baking sheet with baking paper
2. mix the olive oil and sugar together in a large bowl until well blended. Mix in the vanilla extract and then beat in the eggs.
3. Combine the flour, salt and baking powder in a separate bowl and gradually stir in the egg mixture until well combined.
4. Fold in the pistachios and cranberries
5. Divide the dough in half and form each piece into a log on the baking sheet. Dust your hands lightly with flour as the dough may be quite sticky
6. Bake in the oven until light brown (around 20-30 mins). Remove from the oven and set aside to cool for 5 minutes
7. Cut the logs into fingers about 1 cm thick. Place it back onto the baking sheet (cut-side down) and cook for a further 10 mins and then turn the biscotti over and cook until golden brown
8. Allow the biscotti to cool on a wire rack
9. Enjoy with a cuppa!!

* The pistachios and cranberries make it a little Christmassy but it can be swapped for other nuts, dried fruit or chocolate.

- Andrea Tan

HOW DID I SEE GOD AT WORK IN 2024?

A BIG THING I LEARNT ABOUT
GOD THIS YEAR....

WHAT HAS GOD TAUGHT ME
ABOUT MYSELF THIS YEAR?

MY TOP 3 FAVOURITE MEMORIES OF THIS YEAR WERE...

1

2

3

THE KEY SOUNDTRACK/ SONG FOR 2024 WOULD BE...

WHAT WOULD BE THE BIBLE VERSE TO REMEMBER FOR THIS YEAR?

WHAT WAS A BIG SURPRISE FOR ME

WHAT WAS AN UNEXPECTED SORROW

WHAT SIGNIFICANT WORLDLY EVENT HAPPENED THIS YEAR AND HOW DID THAT MAKE ME FEEL?

THIS YEAR, I'M THANKFUL FOR THESE THREE PEOPLE, BECAUSE...

1	2	3
---	---	---

WHAT WAS SOMETHING I MADE OR DID THAT I AM PARTICULARLY PROUD OF?

THE MOST CHALLENGING THING ABOUT 2024 WAS...

LOOKING AHEAD

WHAT IS SOMETHING I NEED TO
LET GO OF FOR 2025?

WHAT IS SOMETHING I NEED TO
COMMIT TO DOING FOR 2025?

WHO IS SOMEONE I WANT TO COMMIT TO PRAYING FOR AND/OR
SPENDING MORE TIME WITH IN 2025? WHY?

MY HOPE AND PRAYER FOR 2025 IS...

And so at the end of Advent 2024, we arrive at another Christmas Day. Each Christmas is a reminder of a hope that we have, that is not imaginary, or disappointing; but rather it's a reminder of a hope that is real. The birth of Christ is a promise delivered.

In John 1, we're reminded that the everlasting Word, the Christ, comes to bring light to the darkness.

¹ In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. ² He was with God in the beginning. ³ Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made. ⁴ In him was life, and that life was the light of all mankind. ⁵ The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.

So whatever darkness you might face this year, or weight that seems overwhelming, be reminded that our everlasting hope, resurrected Christ, shines in that darkness, and his light can never be extinguished.

See the Light.

- Bert Han

EXTRA NOTES

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