



## LGC Daily Devotion Guide 2011

Week 51

December 18-24, 2011

**Theme: Advent**

### I. Adoration

#### (1) Invocation Prayer

“Loving Father, help us remember the birth of Jesus, that we may share in the song of the angels, the gladness of the shepherds and the wisdom of the wise men. Close the door of hate and open the door of love all over the world. Deliver us from evil by the blessing which Christ brings and teach us to be merry with clean hearts. May the Christmas morning make us happy to be your children, and the Christmas evening bring us to our beds with grateful thoughts, forgiving and forgiven, for Jesus’ sake. Amen.” (Robert Louis Stevenson, 1850-1894)

#### (2) Adoration through Psalm 116

(We’ll use this Psalm of praise, not for this week’s Bible reading)

- Read slowly this passage at least three times and each day gather one thought about this psalm that points to God’s character and translate it into a prayer of adoration.

### II. Confession

Pause now and ask the Holy Spirit to reveal to you your sins and ask for forgiveness.

### III. Thanksgiving

In the 4th week of Advent, as you give thanks from the bottom of your heart, give thanks especially for Christ’s love. List your thanksgiving items, one by one.

### IV. Scriptural Reflection:

This is the last of the four weeks of Advent reflection, and we shall focus on “love” brought forth by the Advent of God’s greatest gift, His only begotten Son, Jesus Christ. Read slowly and reflectively the assigned passage twice at least and consider the questions below each day:

**December 18**

**Lamentation 3: 19-33**

**Because of His Great Love**

The prophet Jeremiah witnessed the fall of Jerusalem and the utter destruction of Judah, only the poorest of the poor remained. The prophet identified himself fully with the immense sufferings of the nation, and composed this lament using first personal singular in this section.

- (1) How did the prophet describe his feeling in vv.19-20? If you do not have time to read the preceding chapters, just read 2:12, 20 to get a sense of the conditions of his people.
- (2) What has led to their sufferings, according to 1:5, 8?
- (3) Can you blame the prophet for being downcast? Was there any way out?
- (4) But such a lament (from the first verse of the book all the way till 3:20) is now changed into hope, because the prophet now calls to mind something very encouraging. What is this according to v.22?
- (5) How can this be a source of hope and a sign of God’s compassion?
- (6) How does this speak to your present condition?
- (7) When he said, “They (God’s compassions) are new every morning,” it meant that he could see God’s compassion every morning. Can you imagine what he saw that caused him to exclaim that great was God’s faithfulness?
- (8) Can you see God’s new compassion every morning? Why or why not?
- (9) In spite of the seemingly hopeless situation of the nation and his people, what gave the prophet strength to continue waiting for God’s salvation?
- (10) What is the main message to you today?

**December 19**

**Romans 5: 1-11**

### **Theme: God's Love Revealed**

- (1) In vv.1-2, Paul reminds us of the three wonderful results of us being justified through faith. What are they?
- (2) Of the three (i.e. peace with God, grace we stand and hope of God's glory) which one has meant the most to you?
- (3) Of the three, which one have you cherished the least? Why is it the case? What can you do about it?
- (4) In reminding us that we should rejoice "which denotes exultant, jubilation" (Cranfield, ICC, *Romans I*, 259), Paul emphasizes that it is not confined to this hope of God's glory, but we should also rejoice in our sufferings. What reason does he give? Do you agree with him? Why or why?
- (5) Paul assures us that our hope (in sufferings) will not disappoint us. What reason, again, does he give? Why does "love" assure us of "hope"? What is their relationship?
- (6) Paul then goes on to show us how special God's love is, which has been poured out in vv.6-8. You might have someone who is willing to die for you, but how special is God's love in comparison? (Note who we were in v.10 before we were reconciled with Him.)
- (7) Underline all the words that pertain to "reconciliation" that Paul uses in vv.9-11. Why does this reconciliation, again, enable us to "rejoice" (the theme Paul begins in the beginning of this section) and how?
- (8) What is the main message to you today?

### **December 20**

#### **I Peter 1: 8-12**

#### **Theme: Even Angels Long to Know**

In reminding us of the blessings of our faith, Peter points out that we have never seen Jesus, and yet we love him and believe in him.

- (1) How can he tell that those believers loved Jesus?
- (2) Can you honestly say that you love Jesus? Why or why not?

- (3) Are you filled with an inexpressible and glorious joy because of your faith in him? Why or why not?
- (4) Take one prophecy from the Old Testament that foretold Jesus' birth or suffering and read it again in light of vv.10-12. (You may want to read Isaiah 9 or 53.) What deeper insight have you gained concerning how the prophet received their inspiration?
- (5) Read Luke 2: 10-14 about the angel's announcement of Jesus' birth. Why would angels also "long to look into these things"? What would be the motive? What would be the need to do so?
- (6) What have you learned about the love of God in the giving of His Son, Jesus Christ to us?

### **December 21**

#### **Hebrews 2: 10-18**

#### **Theme: How Can We Ignore?**

- (1) Who is the author of salvation? Is He not perfect already? Why did God need to make Him perfect? How would suffering make Him perfect? (Read 5:7-10)
- (2) Who were we before we were saved? How come that we can be called His brothers? (Read one or all of the following passages—Romans 8:15,23; Galatians 4:5, Ephesians 1:5)
- (3) This passage gives at least two important reasons why Jesus has to become flesh and blood like us. What are the two reasons and what is the significance of each?
- (4) "Because He himself suffered when he was tempted, he is able to help those who are being tempted." (2:18) It appears that the most severe temptations and sufferings that Jesus faced would begin at the Garden of Gethsemane all the way to the cross. How did He overcome His sufferings? How then is He going to help us in our sufferings?
- (5) 1:3 says, "...how shall we escape if we ignore such a great salvation?" Have you ignored this great salvation? In what way should we not ignore this great salvation?

- (6) What is the main message for you today and how would you respond to it?

**December 22**

**Matthew 1: 18-25**  
**Theme: In His Time**

- (1) Do you know why Jesus Christ has to come as a human being?
- (2) If so, could he not just appear as an adult? Why should he take on the entire human process: conception, birth, growth and death?
- (3) Why is it a must that he was born of a virgin?
- (4) We all get excited about Christmas and that God has come, but to Mary and Joseph it was not all joy and peace in the beginning. It is obvious that when God came into the life of Mary and Joseph, it was first marked by “disruptions”. Why was it? What purpose did such disruptions serve?
- (5) Read carefully the words spoken by the angel to Joseph:
  - a. How did he address Joseph, why?
  - b. What did he assure Joseph of?
  - c. How should he name the child and why?
  - d. How did Joseph greet this vision?
- (6) How did Mary greet the same news (see Luke 1:46)?
- (7) One of the most widespread rumors of the early century was that Mary conceived Jesus out of wedlock. How did Matthew help rebut such a rumor with vv.22-23?
- (8) “Immanuel” means God with us: spent some time to reflect on what it means to you personally.
- (9) As much as Joseph did not say or express any excitement as Mary did, “he did what the angel of the Lord had commanded him”. How important was his obedience to the plan of God?
- (10) Is there anything that God has commanded you to do lately? What has prevented you from doing just as He has commanded?
- (11) What is the main message to you today?

**December 23**

**Matthew 2: 1-12**  
**Theme: Who Welcome Him?**

Although we do not know exactly when the magi visited Jesus, but from 2:11, we understand that Jesus was not a new born baby any more.

- (1) Who told King Herod where Jesus was likely born? Did these people follow the magi and look for Jesus? What does it tell you about them?
- (2) Why would these magi take so much trouble, risks and time to look for Jesus?
- (3) They were most likely star-gazers from Iran or Babylonians. Why would God choose to reveal Jesus’ birth to them, of all people? Is there any theological significance?
- (4) Compare how the magi greeted the sign of Christ’s birth and how King Herod and the people of Jerusalem greeted the same news. What is the message here?
- (5) Once again, Matthew quoted from an OT prophecy concerning the Messiah. How important is this fulfillment?
- (6) Presenting treasures was a fitting tribute to a king, but the choice of these magi was unique and appropriate to both Jesus and the parents.
  - a. What might be the symbolic significance of these gifts?
  - b. What might be the practical importance of these gifts to this poor, young family who would be fleeing to Egypt soon?
- (7) Did the Magi have any clue as to the significance of their journey and their obedience?
- (8) What is the main message to you today?

**December 24**

**Luke 2: 8-12**  
**Theme: Good News of Great Joy**

- (1) Who might be the audience intended by the angelic proclamation?
  - a. The shepherd? Why them. of all people?
  - b. The Jews who heard the story and praises by the

shepherds? Would they believe their story (given the extremely low status assigned to shepherds in those days)? Did anyone of them follow them or their direction to worship Jesus?

- c. Mary and Joseph? What might it have meant to them?
  - d. The readers of Luke's gospel (i.e. "all the people")? What is the reaction to the Christmas story of the world today?
- (2) Why didn't the angel appear in a public square so that more people would know?
  - (3) Why don't angels continue to appear today and reaffirm this great news?
  - (4) Who is Jesus as affirmed by the angels?
  - (5) What was the sign given to the shepherds? How similar or dissimilar was it to that recorded in 23:53?
  - (6) How was God glorified by the birth of Christ?
  - (7) How has peace given to men because of His birth?
  - (8) Reflect on v.19? What does it mean? Why was Mary only being mentioned?
  - (9) What then was the role of these shepherds? How did they fulfill their role?
  - (10) What is the main message to you today? What should your response be?

## V. Meditative Reflection

This week we shall be reflecting on Advent based on the following poems composed by Christian poets in time past. You may not be used to reading poems, but they do reveal deep and personal encounters with God that you may identify with, if you read slowly and reflectively, jotting down thoughts that might be meaningful to you. Translate these thoughts into prayers of response accordingly.

### December 18

#### Christmas

*Moonless darkness stands between.*

*Past, O Past, no more be seen!*

*But the Bethlehem star may lead me*

*To the sight of Him who freed me.*

*From the self that I have been.*

*Make me pure, Lord:*

*Thou art holy;*

*Make me meek, Lord,*

*Thou wert lowly;*

*Now beginning, and always:*

*Now begin, on Christmas Day.*

Gerard Manley Hopkins (1844-1889)

We have reflected on his other poem on fleeting peace on December 5, here this 19<sup>th</sup> century great poet and Greek scholar wrote this poem as a prayer on Christmas Day. Can you echo within your soul some of the things he prayed about?

### December 19

#### Jesus the very thought of Thee

*Jesus, the very thought of Thee  
With sweetness fills my breast;  
But sweeter far Thy face to see,  
And in Thy presence rest.*

*With Mary to Thy tomb I'll haste,  
Before the dawning skies,  
And all around with longing cast  
My soul's inquiring eyes.*

*Beside Thy grave will make my moan,  
And sob my heart away;  
Then at Thy feet sit trembling down,  
And there adoring stay.*

*Nor from my tears and sighs refrain,  
Nor those dear feet release,  
My Jesus, till from Thee I gain  
Some blessed word of peace*

St. Bernard of Clairvaux (1090 to 1153)

## **December 20**

### **Love Divine, All Loves Excelling**

*Love divine, all loves excelling,  
Joy of heaven to earth come down;  
Fix in us thy humble dwelling;  
All thy faithful mercies crown!  
Jesus, Thou art all compassion,  
Pure unbounded love Thou art;  
Visit us with Thy salvation;  
Enter every trembling heart.*

*Breathe, O breathe Thy loving Spirit,  
Into every troubled breast!  
Let us all in Thee inherit;  
Let us find that second rest.  
Take away our bent to sinning;  
Alpha and Omega be;  
End of faith, as its Beginning,  
Set our hearts at liberty.*

*Come, Almighty to deliver,  
Let us all Thy life receive;  
Suddenly return and never,  
Never more Thy temples leave.  
Thee we would be always blessing,*

*Serve Thee as Thy hosts above,  
Pray and praise Thee without ceasing,  
Glory in Thy perfect love.*

*Finish, then, Thy new creation;  
Pure and spotless let us be.  
Let us see Thy great salvation  
Perfectly restored in Thee;  
Changed from glory into glory,  
Till in heaven we take our place,  
Till we cast our crowns before Thee,  
Lost in wonder, love, and praise.*

By Charles Wesley (1707-1788)

(A story by Cliff Barrow: In 1961, during the Manchester, England, crusade...just as the meetings were about to start, Billy Graham became quite seriously ill...Billy had been scheduled to speak to the ministers of London just before the crusade opened. You can imagine my feelings when he sent word that I should represent him and speak at that meeting. The British pastors are themselves thorough scholars and often brilliant preachers. And they were expecting to hear Billy Graham, not me!

At the beginning of that meeting in Westminster's Central Hall, the ministers joined in singing this great hymn of Charles Wesley. Most of these British clergymen were also well acquainted with hymn texts and hymn tunes, and they sang gloriously. Accompanied by the grand piano and the great pipe organ and using the Welsh tune "Blaenwern," these familiar words lifted our hearts in praise and prayer to God. I felt God's strength evident through the singing; He blessed our meeting together despite my fears and their disappointment.)

## **December 21**

### **It Came Upon a Midnight Clear**

*It came upon a midnight clear,  
That glorious song of old,*

*From angels bending near the earth,  
To touch their harps of gold:  
"Peace on the earth, goodwill to men,  
From heaven's all-gracious King."  
The world in solemn stillness lay,  
To hear the angels sing.*

*Still through the cloven skies they come,  
With peaceful wings unfurled,  
And still their heavenly music floats  
O'er all the weary world;  
Above its sad and lowly plains,  
They bend on hovering wing,  
And ever o'er its Babel sounds  
The blessed angels sing.*

*Yet with the woes of sin and strife  
The world has suffered long;  
Beneath the angel-strain have rolled  
Two thousand years of wrong;  
And man, at war with man, hears not  
The love-song which they bring;  
O hush the noise, ye men of strife,  
And hear the angels sing.*

*And ye, beneath life's crushing load,  
Whose forms are bending low,  
Who toil along the climbing way  
With painful steps and slow,  
Look now! for glad and golden hours  
come swiftly on the wing.  
O rest beside the weary road,  
And hear the angels sing!*

*For lo!, the days are hastening on,  
By prophet bards foretold,  
When with the ever-circling years  
Comes round the age of gold  
When peace shall over all the earth*

*Its ancient splendors fling,  
And the whole world give back the song  
Which now the angels sing.*

Edmund Sears composed the five-stanza poem in 1849. It first appeared on December 29, 1849 in the *Christian Register* in Boston. And in 1850, Richard Storrs Willis, a composer who trained under Felix Mendelssohn, wrote the melody.

## **December 22**

### **The Nativity of Christ**

*Behold the father is his daughter's son,  
The bird that built the nest is hatch'd therein,  
The old of years an hour hath not outrun,  
Eternal life to live doth now begin,  
The word is dumb, the mirth of heaven doth weep,  
Might feeble is, and force doth faintly creep.*

*O dying souls! Behold your living spring!  
O dazzled eyes! Behold your son of grace!  
Dull ears attend what word this word doth bring!  
Up, heavy hearts, with joy your joy embrace!  
From death, from dark, from deafness, from despair,  
This life, this light, this word, this joy repairs.*

*Gift better than Himself God doth not know  
Gift better than His God no man can see;*

*This gift doth here the giver given bestow  
Gift to this gift let each receiver be:  
God is my gift, Himself He freely gave me.  
God's gift am I, and none but God shall have me.*

*Man alter'd was by sin from man to beast;  
Beast's food is hay, hay is all mortal flesh;  
Now God is flesh, and lives in manger press'd,  
As hay the brutest sinner to refresh:  
Oh happy field wherein this fodder grew,  
Whose taste doth us from beats to men renew!*

By Robert Southwell (c. 1561 – 21 February 1595)

### **December 23**

#### **The Nativity of Our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ**

*Where is this stupendous stranger,  
\*Swains of Solyma, advise,                   [\*shepherds of Judaea]  
Lead me to my Master's manger,  
Show me where my Savior lies.*

*O Most Mighty! O Most Holy!  
Far beyond the seraph's thought,  
Art thou then so mean and lowly  
As unheeded prophets taught?*

*O the magnitude of meekness!  
Worth from worth immortal sprung;  
O the strength of infant weakness,*

*If eternal is so young!*

*If so young and thus eternal,  
Michael tune the shepherd's reed,  
Where the scenes are ever \*vernal,       [\*fresh]  
And the loves be Love indeed!*

*See the God blasphem'd and doubted  
In the schools of Greece and Rome;  
See the pow'rs of darkness routed,  
Taken at their utmost gloom.*

*Nature's decorations glisten  
Far above their usual trim;  
Birds on box and laurels listen,  
As so near the cherubs hymn.*

*\*Boreas now no longer winters       [\*Greek god of the north wind]  
On the desolated coast;  
Oaks no more are riv'n in splinters  
By the whirlwind and his host.*

*\*Spinks and \*ouzels sing sublimely,       [\*sparrows & blackbirds]  
"We too have a Savior born";  
Whiter blossoms burst untimely  
On the blest Mosaic thorn.*

*God all-bounteous, all-creative,  
Whom no ills from good dissuade,  
Is incarnate, and a native  
Of the very world He made.*

By Christopher Smart (1722-1772)

### **December 24**

#### **II Christmas Liturgy**

*In the highest, hark! The train,  
“Glory to the new-born King!  
Who doth with Him peace, again  
Joining earth with heaven bring!”*

*Honor thus is paid aright  
Unto this. Christ’s natal morn;  
At Whose birth the grace so bright  
Of anew-made law is born.*

*The appointed Mediator,  
Our salvation’s price to pay.  
Not His share in human nature,  
But in misdeed, puts away.*

*Not a whit less bright appearing  
The life-giving star we see;  
Nor doth Mary by child-bearing  
Lose her spotless chastity.*

*What is his rock-stone so precious,  
Quarried not by hand, but Jesus,  
Scion of a line of kings,  
Who, begot, without man’s aid,  
Of a pure yet pregnant maid,  
From her fleshly nature Springs?*

*Let the desert blossom forth;  
Joy, waste places of the earth!  
Jesse’s rod doth flowers unfold.*

*Root it brancheth, branch it bloometh,  
Virgin-born, a Savior cometh,  
AS the law of old foretold.*

*David’s self that root portended  
Mary is that branch, descended  
From the seed of royal line:  
He, the son unto us given,  
Is its flower, a flower from heaven,  
Since its fragrance is divine.*

*He, whose birth’s due celebration  
From the angel’s proclamation,  
In a manger-cradle lies;  
Heavenly hosts therein delight,  
Whilst the shepherd watch by night  
‘Neath the silence of the skies.*

*All things shouts of joy upraise  
For the Virgin’s Son most high;  
Him the law and psalms too praise  
With the page of prophecy.*

*Angels’, shepherds’, salutations,  
Stars’ and wise men’s indications,  
In their object all agree:  
Haste those Eastern kings where, crying,  
In a crib a Babe is lying,  
Who the Gentile first-fruits be.*

*Infant Jesu, death-bound never!  
 For a time and yet for ever!  
 By Thy might mankind deliver  
 From this life's adversity:  
 When this mortal life is ended,  
 From this living death ascended,  
 By Thy clemency befriended,  
 Grant us deathless life with Thee! Amen.*

This is the second of the seven Christmas liturgies of Adam of St. Victor of the 12<sup>th</sup> century who has been credited with the beginning of deriving music from popular songs in introducing something close to the traditional Christmas carols.

**VI. A Time for Silence**

You have meditated much with your intellectual faculty today. Now have a moment of silence (the length is up to you, 5 or even 30 minutes), and ask God quietly, “Lord, is there any important message from you today that I might have missed? Show me, your servant is listening?”

**VII. Supplication**

Apart from praying for yourselves (list them out in your prayer journal to keep track of how God might answer them), use the following chart to cover people and ministries that you want to remember before the Lord:

	Your family	Other people	Church Ministries	Other Ministries	City & World	Others
Sunday						
Monday						
Tuesday						
Wed						
Thursday						
Friday						
Saturday						

**VII. Benediction**

“On this day of Christmas, the Word of God, being truly God, appeared in the form of man, and turned all adoration to Himself and away from competing claims for our attention. To Him, then, who through the forest of lies has beaten a clear path for us, to Christ, to the Father, and to the Holy Spirit, we offer all praise, now and forever. Amen.” (John Chrysostom, c. 347-407)