

Feeling Christmassy?

**Daily Devotions for Christmas
29th November to 25th December 2015**



Do you feel Christmassy yet? The shops have been full of decorations and gift ideas for a while now. Are you in a panic that Christmas is fast approaching? For many they feel that the Christmas season is a time of stress and pressure – getting together family members who don't always get along, trying to buy the best gifts. For others it is a time of loneliness as they miss those who have passed away, those who are far away or those who have stayed away. Some anticipate Christmas with excitement and others with dread. What is that elusive Christmassy feeling? This year as we approach the Christmas season I want to take time to examine the emotions and the feelings of that first Christmas. In doing so we will take a look at ourselves and our response to Christmas in order to prepare ourselves to really worship this year.

Sunday 29th November

Read: Psalm 104.1-35

Look around at God's creation today and experience wonder and awe. God took such care in creation – look at the detail and intricacy of His creation and see His fingerprints everywhere.

Romans 1.20 For since the creation of the world God's invisible qualities-- his eternal power and divine nature--have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that men are without excuse.

When God created you He designed you with 206 bones and 640 muscles – you are a work of art, a well-engineered being. The overwhelming emotion that God has for you, His creation, is love.

Psalm 139.14 I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made; your works are wonderful, I know that full well.

This is the underlying feeling and emotion running throughout the whole of the Bible – God's love for you. It underpins Christmas and motivates Easter.

As you turn your eyes towards Christmas marvel and wonder at God's wonderful creation and observe the fingerprints of love.

Monday 30th November

Read: Genesis 3.1-24

Disappointment is an emotion that many of us are familiar with. That horrible feeling of hoping for the best from someone and being let down. God felt this soon after the wonder and awe of His glorious creation – the people He took such care in making and invested His heart in, chose to go their own way. We catch a glimpse of this disappointment just before God sent the flood – we read that the whole earth was wicked and doing their own thing rather than following God, except for Noah.

Genesis 6.6 The LORD was grieved that he had made man on the earth, and his heart was filled with pain.

Yet, thankfully, God did not let His regret and disappointment overrule everything. Christmas is His solution to our rebellion and sin problem – it is the evidence that God’s love for you is strong enough that He does not walk away when you mess up or disappoint Him. Yes, sin has consequences, but God loves you enough to find a way through it, together.

Christmas can be a tough time when thinking of damaged relationships – will you reach out this Christmas time to someone you feel has disappointed you? Will you let love be stronger than regret? Don’t allow your disappointments to ruin your Christmas.

Tuesday 1st December

Read: Romans 8.28-39

While God was disappointed by the sin choices of Man, whom He so carefully created, He was not surprised or overwhelmed. In fact He was determined to restore and repair the damage that sin brought. To the serpent, who had lied to Adam and Eve, He said:

Genesis 3.15 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.

God had a plan and it involved His own son Jesus – Christmas is a sign to us that God was determined and did not give up on us. God’s plan was not thrown off by sin, He knew we would stray and immediately sprang to action. It took a few thousand years, a lot of lessons for Israel and many descendants to bring this intricate plan to life.

Isaiah 55.8 For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, "declares the LORD.

Take some time today to thank God that He had not been undeterred by your sin and that He had a plan for your rescue- Christmas, even though it was so costly for Him.

Wednesday 2nd December

Read: Exodus 1. 1-22

God had a plan to bring salvation through His Son Jesus, which started with the nation of Israel – they were to honour God and point people to Him. Through Abraham's family He said that He would bless the world.

Genesis 12.2 "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.

Yet often God's own people frustrated His plan. A few generations after Abraham, God's chosen people, ended up in slavery in Egypt. As a nation they developed a pattern of following God when times were tough, doing their own thing when times were easier and then calling out to God when they got into trouble again. But despite this frustrating pattern, God persisted and kept His promises. Jesus' birth is a reminder of that.

Matthew 1.17 Thus there were fourteen generations in all from Abraham to David, fourteen from David to the exile to Babylon, and fourteen from the exile to the Christ.

Forty-two generations but God was faithful to keep His promises and to bring His salvation plan about.

Have you kept your promises to God and to others? Is there any area that you need to prove yourself faithful rather than give up because of frustration? God will not forget you – keep praying. He will be faithful to you.

Thursday 3rd December

Read: Joshua 2.1-24

God's plan for salvation, which reached a crescendo at the first Christmas, involved Israel taking possession of the Promised Land. It must have been intriguing for other nations to watch and see how God granted this small nation favour in tough battles. What did they have that was different – could it be the God

that they serve? One spectator to this was Rahab, a prostitute and resident of Jericho. She had heard about Israel's God and pleaded with Joshua's men to keep her family safe.

Joshua 6.25 But Joshua spared Rahab the prostitute, with her family and all who belonged to her, because she hid the men Joshua had sent as spies to Jericho--and she lives among the Israelites to this day.

Joshua kept his promise and Rahab is even mentioned in the lineage of Jesus (Matthew 1.5). How wonderful for this lady, who would have been a society outcast, to be accepted and not condemned. Her family were accepted, included and protected. That is a glimpse of a Christmassy feeling. We all have messed up in some way, yet Jesus' coming speaks of how God seeks to include rather than condemn.

Romans 8.1-2 Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus, 2 because through Christ Jesus the law of the Spirit of life set me free from the law of sin and death.

I don't know where you are in your walk with God, but if you have messed up and feel that you don't deserve Christmas don't turn away – in Jesus there is forgiveness, there is no condemnation; there is acceptance.

Friday 4th December

Read: Ruth 4.1-22

I'm sure that for many of you the Christmas you celebrate this year will be different from the traditions you grew up with. Even though you may have fond memories of that time, your life has changed and perhaps your family traditions have changed. The life that Ruth grew up with in Moab was vastly different from her new life, married into God's people, living in a foreign country. Yet she willingly embraced God and the new – as a result she was blessed beyond measure to be included as the great grandmother of King David. Ruth, an outcast Moabite, was included in the direct lineage of Jesus.

Isaiah 43.18-19 "Forget the former things; do not dwell on the past. 19 See, I am doing a new thing! Now it springs up; do you not perceive it? I am making a way in the desert and streams in the wasteland.

Perhaps like Ruth you feel like you are separated or cut off from all that is familiar. Maybe you are facing your first Christmas far from home, or without a loved one who has passed away? Whatever has made this year different than the past be open to God doing something new and something different this Christmas in your life.

Why don't you invite someone who is far from home to join you this year or call in with someone who you know is facing a very different Christmas than previous years?

Saturday 5th December

Read: Isaiah 42.1-9

Despite the repeated mess-ups by Israel, the prophet Isaiah had hope. His hope was not that Israel would suddenly get their act together, but rather His hope was in the actions of the Lord – his hope was in what would happen because of that first Christmas, when Jesus would come. When you celebrate Christmas celebrate in Hope because, although you know the world you live in is messed up and that injustice and sin have damaged so much, yet know that Jesus is bringing about a wonderful change. We live in a time when Jesus' salvation has come through His death and resurrection but sin is still causing brokenness.

Philippians 3.20-21 But our citizenship is in heaven. And we eagerly await a Savior from there, the Lord Jesus Christ, 21 who, by the power that enables him to bring everything under his control, will transform our lowly bodies so that they will be like his glorious body.

As you prepare to celebrate Christmas in less than three weeks, it may be that the brokenness of this world, your life or your relationships is getting you down and making you feel like there is not much to celebrate. Look on this time as a time of hope – a time when you look forward to the fullness God's Kingdom coming. Give Him your broken dreams and tears.

Revelation 21.4 He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away

Sunday 6th December

Read: Isaiah 9.1-7

I think for most of us Christmas does not feel like a peaceful time – it can be a time of family tension, or, of stress as you battle with crowds in the mall. So many things rob us of peace and joy, affecting how we celebrate Christmas. Yet God has designed you for Peace, His Shalom. Shalom, the Hebrew word for peace, means more than just the absence of fighting – although for some of us that would be wonderful enough. But Shalom is total wellbeing. Jesus is the Prince of Peace in this chaotic and stressful world.

John 14.27 Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid.

Do you feel dizzy at this time of year? Ice Skaters and Dancers are able to keep themselves from getting dizzy when they spin around so fast because they keep their eyes fixed on one spot. We need to do the same in this time of restlessness – keep you eyes fixed on Jesus, the Prince of Peace.

Hebrews 12.2 Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before him endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.

If you feel the pressure of life and the stresses of Christmas spinning you round make sure you take time each day to focus on Jesus, let Him be your Prince of Peace.

Monday 7th December

Read: Joshua 24.1-28

It is hard to go against the flow or against peer pressure. As you look around the malls and people's houses you will see how Jesus' birth has been hijacked and turned into a moneymaking opportunity. Yet the wrapping and the glitz can so easily distract from us from resolutely following God. Joshua shows us what resolution looks like. Israel got so easily distracted and side-tracked by the other nations and false gods around them, yet Joshua determined that he and his family would only serve God. Joshua is the same guy who was sent as a spy into the Promised Land by Moses – the other spies said that it was too dangerous and too scary but Joshua and his friend Caleb said:

Numbers 14.9 Only do not rebel against the LORD. And do not be afraid of the people of the land, because we will swallow them up. Their protection is gone, but the LORD is with us. Do not be afraid of them.

As you start your Christmas preparations this year don't be afraid to do things a differently than those around you. There is nothing wrong with gifts and the glitter of Christmas, but keep your focus on Jesus this year and honour Him.

What can you do this Christmas to honour Jesus and show your resolve in following of Him?

Tuesday 8th December

Read: Psalm 139. 1-29

Where are you God? Has this ever been your cry? It was so many times for Israel – often when they were in trouble they felt that God had moved away from them, or, turned His face away from them. But actually, as this Psalm shows, there is nowhere you can go to escape the presence and care of God. Do you feel that God is far from you or remote? Jesus' birth is a tangible sign to you that God wants to be close to you.

Isaiah 7.14 Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign: The virgin will be with child and will give birth to a son, and will call him Immanuel.

One of the names Jesus was known as was Immanuel, which means God is with you. In Christmas you can see God stepping towards you in reconciliation, to bridge that chasm that sin has caused.

James 4.8 Come near to God and he will come near to you

What will you do today to take a step towards God – He is with you and waiting but you need to reach out to Him.

Wednesday 9th December

Read: Isaiah 53.1-12

That happy man in the red suit would have us all believe that Christmas is the season to be merry and bright. But in reality for many it is a time of loneliness and sorrow. When it is your first Christmas without a loved one – perhaps lost through death or even through broken relationships - it can be really tough. In the jolliness of a commercial Christmas it can be easy to forget the more sombre side of the time of year. It is not just about a baby born, it is about a baby who was born to die and to carry our sins.

Mark 8.31 He then began to teach them that the Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders, chief priests and teachers of the law, and that he must be killed and after three days rise again.

Jesus understands suffering and sorrow; He understands grief. In fact, He says that this is one of the reasons why He came. In His first public sermon, Jesus said that He came for the broken and grieving:

Isaiah 61.2-3 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 gladness instead of mourning, and a garment of praise instead of a spirit of despair.

If you are facing Christmas this year with sorrow, then turn to Jesus who understands you. If you have someone in your life whom you know is dreading this Christmas reach out to them, then show them God's love.

Thursday 10th December

Read: Luke 1.5-25

Some of those participants in that first Christmas were a bit bemused and bewildered by it all. John the Baptist's Dad, Zechariah, is a good example of that. The strange thing is that He was a priest and we are told he was a follower of God. This man, who sought to obey God, didn't understand God's plan and could not see his part in that plan. He and his wife were elderly and had not managed to have children so when an angel came to him to say that he would have a son who would prepare people for the coming of salvation, he was flummoxed.

Jeremiah 29.11 For I know the plans I have for you," declares the LORD, "plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.

Zechariah trusted God, but he was sceptical that God could use him in this seemingly impossible way – yet God did the impossible.

I don't know what your life looks like right now, but trust God and keep an open mind – seek His plan for your life and let Him do the seemingly impossible. He is able.

Friday 11th December

Read: Matthew 1.18-25

Whilst Zechariah was less amenable to God's changes of plans for His life, Joseph was more trusting. For Joseph there was the possibility of public ridicule, yet he simply followed God's instructions even though it was a massive change of plan for him. I wonder why Joseph and Zechariah's reactions were so different – what made Joseph so trusting? We are not really told the answer to this but Joseph's trust in God must have been based on God's character – He is trustworthy.

Psalm 111.7 The works of his hands are faithful and just; all his precepts are trustworthy.

When God said that He would bring salvation through the Messiah, Joseph believed and when he was included in that plan Joseph trusted and obeyed.

Proverbs 3.5-6 Trust in the LORD with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; 6 in all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make your paths straight.

Do you have a hard time trusting God? Make a list today of verses and reasons that show you how trustworthy God is.

Saturday 12th December

Read: Mark 1.1-8

The Gospel of Mark doesn't give us a Nativity story and instead launches into John the Baptist's ministry. He was the forerunner for his cousin, Jesus – a kind of Town Crier or a signpost to point people towards Jesus. Right from the Garden of Eden, God had been directing people's attention towards His Son, Jesus, as the bringer of salvation. Christmas and Easter all point to Jesus for salvation. John the Baptist found it is not always a popular message, yet he persisted because there is no other way for salvation.

It must have been tough for John the Baptist to face rejection as he pointed people towards Jesus – but it did not stop him. He believed in his message and his calling with a passion.

John 14.6 Jesus answered, "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.

Do you believe that Jesus is the only way to salvation? If so will you be a signpost today and point people towards Jesus? How do you respond to people who oppose you because of your faith in Jesus?

Sunday 13th December

Read: Luke 1.26-38 & 46-56

Mary felt honoured to be chosen by God. Her faith was simple and uncomplicated. I think many of us would have reacted differently than Mary, asking why me and complaining that it would be too costly to do what God asked. Yet Mary recognised the honour of playing a small part in God's plan for the world. I'm sure she did not fully understand what lay ahead of her – to see her own son beaten and crucified – but she knew that God had a wonderful plan and she was honoured to be a little part of that.

John 19.5 Near the cross of Jesus stood his mother, his mother's sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene.

Mary's focus was on God's will being done and His salvation being brought to the world rather than on her own plans and comfort. This is the opposite of how most of us approach Christmas – it's all about what I want and what I plan.

Ask God what you can do this Christmas to make His salvation the focus of your celebrations. Seek to make Mary's reaction of wonder and awe yours this Christmas time.

Monday 14th December

Read: John 1. 1-18

Rather than giving us the detail of Jesus' birth the Gospel of John looks at His birth from a big plan perspective. Jesus is described as the Light here – coming into the darkness. Darkness is anything that lack's God's presence, that which fosters fear and secrecy. We are told that Jesus brings light:

John 8.2 When Jesus spoke again to the people, he said, "I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life."

Yet John's nativity tells us that people will reject Jesus. For those of us who follow Jesus that can be really confusing – why would people reject salvation, why would they reject forgiveness of sins? It can be for many reasons – perhaps they have

been seeking light or salvation in other places, perhaps they are too ashamed to deal with their own sin. They don't understand that Jesus loves them and will not condemn them if they turn to Him. Even though Jesus knew that not everyone would accept or understand why He came He still came, He still died, He still rose again to offer everyone salvation if they accept it. In the same way He calls you and I to bring His light also.

Matthew 5.14 You are the light of the world.

You may be nervous to share your salvation in Jesus with others – yes you may be rejected, but nevertheless you are God's light. How will you shine for Jesus?

Tuesday 15th December

Read: Luke. 2-1-7

The actual birth of Jesus must have been hard on Mary and Joseph – they ended up away from home with no home comforts for the birth. What a way to welcome the Saviour of the World. Yet it was fitting as King of Kings came to us cloaked in humility, rather than with a big fanfare.

Isaiah 53.2 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.

I'm sure like any parent Mary and Joseph wanted nothing but the best for their child, yet the kind of birth God chose was one that was ordinary and simple.

John 1.14 The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us.

Jesus literally moved in with us, pitched His tent in our neighbourhood. He did this to be able to identify with us and because His salvation task required Him to suffer in order to conqueror.

This humility is the antithesis of how we celebrate Christmas with its glitz and glitter. Can you find a way this year to mark the real humility of Christmas as you decorate your home?

Wednesday 16th December

Read: Luke 2.8-20

In keeping with the humility of Jesus' birth, the first visitors to the baby King of Kings were the humble shepherds. They were just ordinary men working an ordinary mundane job. Yet God sought them out and gave them the privilege of the angel choir birth announcement. How honoured and excited they were. They immediately dropped what they were doing and rushed to see Jesus. And when they did see Him they were so excited that they could not stop telling everybody. How amazing it must have been to be one of those shepherds. Jesus' birth and the visit of the shepherds are a reminder to us of God's love and delight for us.

Zephaniah 3.17 The LORD your God is with you, he is mighty to save. He will take great delight in you, he will quiet you with his love, he will rejoice over you with singing."

Some people feel like God is not interested in them – they are too lowly and insignificant. But God thinks otherwise. Jesus' birth and the Shepherd's visits show otherwise, too. You may feel like nothing, but God says He takes delight in you.

Take some time today to marvel and wonder that God loves you so much and that He delights in you. Seek to have the excitement of the shepherds as you approach Christmas time.

Thursday 17th December

Read: Matthew 2.1-12

The second set of visitors to Jesus took a while to get there – the Magi, probably astrologers, came to visit a Jesus who was likely to be a toddler at that stage. They were foreigners, men who were educated and very curious. So curious that they packed their bags went on a long journey to seek out Jesus. They were brave in their curiosity and even went to the Herod's palace to seek the new King. When they finally found Him they worshipped.

Psalm 8.3-4 When I consider your heavens, the work of your fingers, the moon and the stars, which you have set in place, 4 what is man that you are mindful of him, the son of man that you care for him?

There are so many ways that God calls the curious to Him, ways in which He attracts their attention and draws their interest – you are part of that plan.

1 Peter 3.15 But in your hearts set apart Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect

Make a list of your friends and family who don't know Jesus and spend sometime today praying to God about them – ask Him to make you a signpost for the curious.

Friday 18th December

Read: Matthew 2.13-18

Not everyone loves Christmas – some people even hate it. That first Christmas saw King Herod turn into a wicked murderer of children- a shocking reaction to Jesus's birth. Herod felt threatened and undermined by Jesus. He wanted to be top dog and in charge. History tells us that Herod was paranoid and even killed his own wife and sons when he felt they threatened his position.

1 Corinthians 2.5 For we are to God the aroma of Christ among those who are being saved and those who are perishing. **16** To the one we are the smell of death; to the other, the fragrance of life.

Not everyone will turn to Jesus for salvation; some people resent needing a Saviour. Some people carry around so much anger that they hurt those who love them. Do you know people like that in your life, whose anger comes between them and a relationship with God? Don't be afraid to keep telling them about Jesus and His love for them – they may not receive the message well from you, but God calls you keep sharing His love no matter the results.

Think of ways you can show the 'angry' people in your life this year the love of God, even if it is difficult.

Saturday 19th December

Read: Luke 2.22-35

Simeon was a patient man – he had been waiting for many years for salvation to come to Israel. He sought God and we are told that he was filled with the Holy Spirit. What a joy it was for Him to see the child Jesus when He was brought to the Temple by His parents. He recognised God's promises were fulfilled and that through this child, the world would be blessed. It can be hard to be patient – it is something that every child struggles with in the days coming up to Christmas. It is something also that adults struggle with, too. When will God fulfil His promises, when will suffering and struggles end? Too often we want a quick fix with instant solutions for our problems.

Galatians 5.22-23 But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, 23 gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law.

Christmas can be a time of year when patience is thinly stretched – queues in the shops, bumping heads with relatives.

Will you accept the challenge to exhibit patience this busy season – ask the Holy Spirit's help?

Sunday 20th December

Read: Isaiah 61.1-11

Brokenness is all too prevalent in our society, in our family, in our lives. Against the backdrop of our cheery Christmas music in the shops many people are walking around broken. The same can be said for the people sitting in our church on a Sunday morning – lives hurt by choices of others, by the affects of sin in our world and at times by the consequences of wrong choices. This is what Christmas is about, this is why Jesus came. Without God in our lives, without His salvation there is no fix for this brokenness we so often feel. But Jesus Himself said this is why He came.

Mark 2.17 On hearing this, Jesus said to them, "It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick. I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners."

Maybe this year you are too broken or hurt to feel 'Christmassy' – well Christmas is for the broken. It is God's hands stretched out in love towards you. God sees your pain, your brokenness and is moved by it – moved to action through Jesus. The reality of Christmas is that Jesus came to deal with all the affects of sin on our world.

Don't let your brokenness stop your from celebrating Christmas this year, instead celebrate with thanksgiving, for Jesus came to bind up the broken-hearted.

Monday 21st December

Read: Matthew 26.36-46

There is always the shadow of Easter throughout the Christmas story – but it can be easy to overlook it and be distracted by the cute image of the baby Jesus surrounded by animals in a stable. Yet Jesus was born to die, to bear our sins on the cross so that we could be made right again in our relationship with God. It is not something we could put right ourselves, our sin destroyed our relationship to God, and only Jesus could pay that penalty. But it was not easy for Jesus - He endured real physical, spiritual and emotional suffering on our behalf – you just need to look at his conversation with His Father in the Garden of Gethsemane. Yet there was no other way and Jesus' love for you could not let Him change His course and walk away.

Philippians 2.8 And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient to death-- even death on a cross!

As you celebrate Christmas this year think about the emotions that Jesus went through – the love that drove Him, the suffering He was to face and know that this was for you.

What steps can you take today to express your gratitude towards Jesus for the lengths that He went to reconcile you to God?

Tuesday 22nd December

Read: John 8.1-11

Fear and shame do not sit well with a 'Christmassy' feeling, yet I am sure it is something that some of you may feel right now. The fear of people finding out what has been going on in your life and shame of sin that you have hidden. It may feel like the opposite of Christmas yet dealing with fear and shame is at the core of why we needed that first Christmas. Often the loudest voice condemning us is not other people but ourselves. Yet by living in the secrecy of fear and shame you cut yourself off from God's forgiveness and light.

1 John 4.18 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.

Don't let something you have done stop you from experiencing the most wonderful fullness of Christmas this year – the joy of knowing God's forgiveness and love.

1 John 1.9 If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.

Don't let unconfessed sin come between you and God today – deal with it before Him, stop doing it and step out of shame into love.

Wednesday 23rd December

Read: Isaiah 58.6-12

I can't predict what will be on the news today just two days before Christmas, but, unfortunately I could safely bet that there would be some kind of injustice and oppression. Lives may have been lost in terrorism. Some people make the mistake in thinking that our salvation is all about going to heaven – yes that is a wonderful part of it, to be in God's presence forever- but Jesus challenges us to also change the way we live our lives. He calls us to live by different standards, the standards that God sets, which include justice and mercy.

Jeremiah 23.5 5 "The days are coming," declares the LORD, "when I will raise up to David a righteous Branch, a King who will reign wisely and do what is just and right in the land.

Take stock of your actions – are you reflecting God’s love of justice in each aspect of your life? Christmas speaks of a time when injustices will be righted and judged.

Psalm 139.23-24 Search me, O God, and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts. 24 See if there is any offensive way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.

Thursday 24th December

Read: Isaiah 11. 1-11

It is Christmas Eve – are you ready for tomorrow? It can be exhausting getting ready for Christmas Day but also life can be exhausting. The stress and pressure can wear a person out, along with the ups and downs of ordinary life. I love that for us Jesus can be our resting place – our way to breakaway from the pressures and the expectations of others. He can be our rest because there is nothing that we can do further to add to our salvation.

John 19.30 When he had received the drink, Jesus said, "It is finished." With that, he bowed his head and gave up his spirit.

There is nothing that you can do to earn more of God’s love or more of His forgiveness – it has all be done that first Christmas and Easter.

Isaiah 40.31 Those who hope in the LORD will renew their strength. They will soar on wings like eagles; they will run and not grow weary, they will walk and not be faint.

If you are tired today, worn out by life, or by trying to please people or God stop, take a deep breath and find your rest in Jesus. Tomorrow we celebrate that it is finished, your salvation is complete in Jesus.

Friday 25th December**Read: Isaiah 60.1-3 & Luke 2.9-12**

What a joyful day. Today we celebrate the coming of Jesus – the coming of salvation, of forgiveness of sins, of reconciliation with God. As you think this morning of that first Christmas gift, the life of Jesus, I trust that your heart is overflowing with gratitude and love for God. These are the feelings of Christmas – knowing the love of God and the power of sins forgiven. Don't let the gifts and the food today distract you from that real 'Christmassy'.

Romans 8. 38-39 For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, 39 neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

This is God's Christmas gift to you – if you have accepted Jesus as your Saviour then nothing can separate you from His love. Let's come together today and truly worship knowing the breadth and depth of God's love for us.

Christmas Services

The services from 29th November to 25th December will all have a special Christmas focus

6 th December	6pm	Journey to Bethlehem at Living Hope, bring a picnic. Carols will start at 7.30pm and will be followed by the turning on of the Christmas Tree lights
20 th December	9am 6pm	Christmas Worship with a difference Christmas Worship with a difference
24 th December	6pm	Carols on the Common – join us for a picnic and Carols on Noordhoek Common
25 th December	9am	Christmas Morning Service

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