

Joy to the *World*

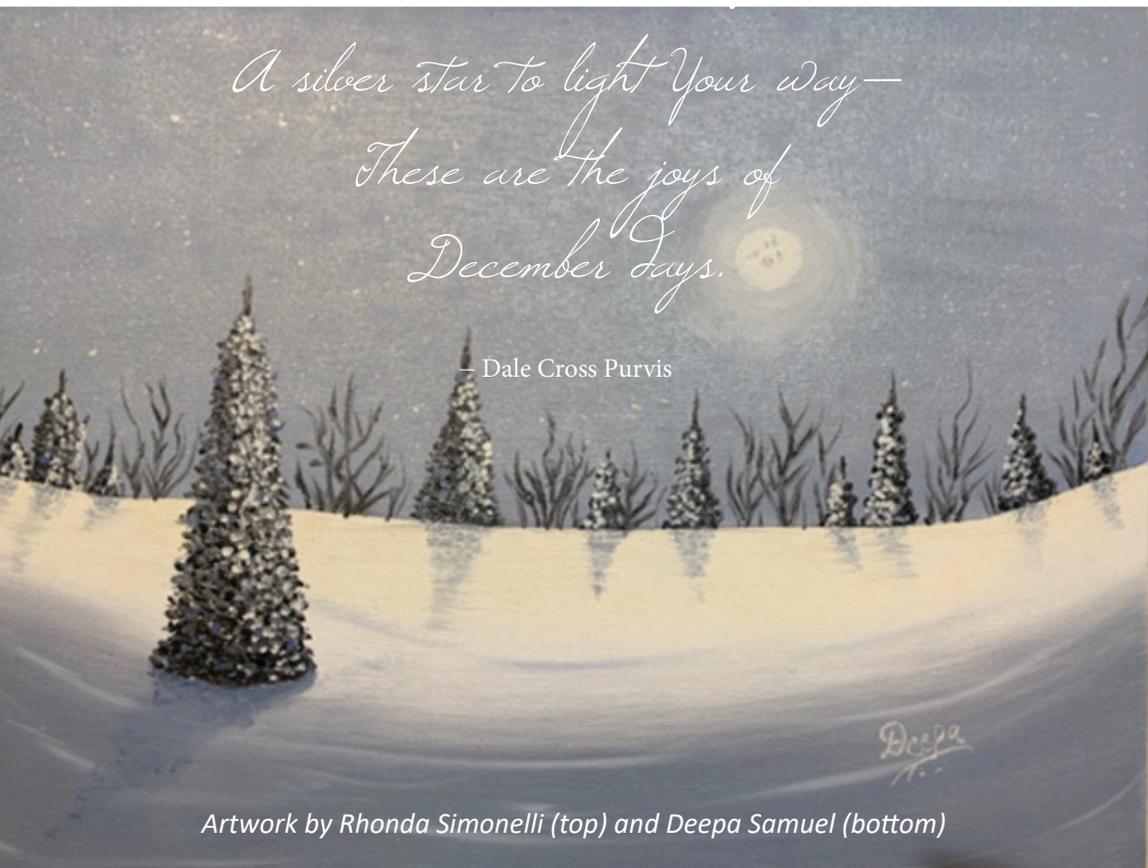
ALDRSGATE *2019* ADVENT DEVOTIONAL

Preview



Bright red birds, soft falling snow,
Children's voices, candleglow,

Rhonda



A silver star to light Your way—
These are the joys of
December Days.

— Dale Cross Purvis

Deeja

Dec. 1

THE CRÈCHE

Matthew 1:18-25, 2:1-11

Educators have observed over time that not all students learn the same way. Some of us are auditory learners, some of us need visuals and graphics to learn. Others learn best by reading, but many of us learn best by tactile learning – where we can touch, move and feel items.

Many years ago, a Nativity stable scene – a crèche – was passed down to us as a gift. It had an open stable area, with straw glued to the roof. In addition to plastic resin figures of sheep and cows, there were several shepherds, a camel and three Wise Men. There was a small cradle, and of course, Mary, Joseph and baby Jesus.

Each year we bring the crèche out at the beginning of Advent. It is a visual reminder of God’s greatest gift to us, His son, Jesus. Through the years, we’ve watched our children and grandchildren move the figures around in the Nativity scene. Sometimes the cows and sheep were grouped together. Occasionally, the Wise Men were mixed in with the shepherds. Sometimes the children had the figures lined up – were they imagining a parade of people coming to see the new King? One year, our dog ate the legs off the camel. (The camel now leans against a wall of the stable...perhaps resting after the long journey). And always, the figure of baby Jesus can be found in the center.

As we shared the story of the

birth of Christ with our children and grandchildren, the Nativity story took on more meaning as they were able to move the Nativity figures around in the stable. They “speak” the parts of what they think the Wise Men and shepherds said to each other, and to Mary, Joseph and Jesus.

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Thank you, Lord, for helping me learn about you in so many ways – through scripture, worship, song and interaction with items in front of me. At this time of the year, help me embrace the Advent season and rejoice in the birth of your son, Jesus.

– Mark and Susan DeVincentis

Dec. 2

A LIST

“And you shall be holy to Me, for I the LORD am holy, and have separated you from the peoples, that you should be Mine.” – Leviticus 20:26 (NKJV)

As I was leaving my house today my neighbor called out “Ready for Christmas?” I smiled as I thought “No, I am not ready.” When can I get the cookies made? Those cut-outs take forever! What can I get for uncle Charlie? He is so hard to buy for! Maybe I will just get him a tie. I have to drag the artificial Christmas tree up from the basement and find the decorations. I should get a new outfit for the party on Saturday, but the malls are so busy this time of year! I’ll make a list. I like lists.

But as I picked up my pen, a song popped into my brain – not a Christmas song – that I’ve been hearing since October. It was an old familiar hymn: “Take Time to be Holy; Speak oft with the Lord”. I knew what the number one item on my list would be: Take time to be holy! Thank God for the best Christmas gift – our Lord, Jesus. If I do that, I will be ready for Christmas.

– Charlotte Ridley

Dec. 3 BE STILL

“Be still, and know that I am God”

– Psalm 46:10

Back in 2005 I experienced a life changing event. I had a heart attack. It wasn’t completely unexpected. My family had a history or heart related trauma. I had prepared—but nothing can truly prepare you for such an event. I was a jogger. I had left home to go for a 3 mile run. I had only gone a short distance when I experienced a sharp pinch in my chest. It stung. I stopped. It went away. So I started to jog again. But once again, a sharp pinch, an intolerable sting. I couldn’t endure it any more. I stopped. I walked home. Arriving home I decided to call my doctor. My doctor said to come in. I was directed to a cardiologist and then from there, to emergency. Here my terror became real. I wasn’t afraid of heart surgery. For that I would be

anesthetized. I was terrified of needles and was scared that I would be constantly stuck with needles to draw blood out or to inject meds in. But I received a card from my church on the first day of my hospital stay and on the front of the card Psalm 46:10 was printed. It said, “Be still and know that I am God.”

That passage spoke to me directly. That passage touched my soul. That word from God made me realize that God was with me and no matter what, I would be ok. Even if I died, I would be ok. From that point on, I was unafraid. I was strong in the knowledge that God loved me and was with me in my time of need. Whenever a nurse came into my room with a tray to take samples, I prayed, “Be still and know that I am God” and I received an incredible sense of peace that enabled me to get through that trial. Knowing that God is love and is with you always, can ease whatever trial you might be dealing with today. Be still. Know that “I Am”... God, loves you very much! *May it be so!*
Amen! – Doug Hess

Dec. 4 CELEBRATION & ANTICIPATION

Advent is the time of preparation; preparation for the celebration of Christmas when God sent his Son Jesus into our world and time of anticipation for the return of Jesus, our Lord & Savior.

Dec. 5

GOD'S PERFECT GIFT

Christmas is nearly upon us. The stress of trying to find the perfect gift begins. There is something special about a brand new gift. It is just for you, it makes you happy and you feel loved by the one who gave it to you. Soon after Christmas these gifts lose your interest, get broken, get lost and start to age. I am not sure what a perfect gift could be.

GOD'S PERFECT GIFT: Jesus came as a little baby to teach us about our father in heaven. He came to give us salvation, saving us from our sins. He would later on give His life for us, thus paying the penalty for our sins in the past, now and in the future. He promised to prepare a place for you and me in His Father's house so that we could live with Him forever. The only thing He asked of us was to believe in Him (John 14:1-3). We shall have fullness of joy in His presence. (Psalm 16:11, Revelation 21:4, 7:16-17). Do you agree with me that this is "The Perfect Gift?" This gift will not age, get lost or broken. God loves us so much! God is good!

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Thank you Jesus for this "perfect gift" offered to us all. Help us to accept this gift of everlasting life with you. Help us to share it with others that have not heard of it. Thank you, Father, for your everlasting love. Blessed be the name of Jesus. Amen.

– Brenda Ruell

We know through scripture (Luke 2:1-14) how Jesus came to earth. He came as a baby—in the flesh as one of us would come into this world. He came to a town called Bethlehem, in a stable. An angelic host announced his arrival to shepherds in a field and Jesus arrived as the Son of Man.

Jesus promised us that he will come again (John 15:28). What will his arrival be like? What will it look like?

God tells us through his word, the Bible, how Jesus will come a second time. The Second Coming will be very different. Instead of a baby in a stable, Jesus will come full-grown as an adult with authority descending with the clouds from heaven (Acts 1:9-11, Daniel 7:13-14). Instead of being on the earth in a little town, He will be between earth and heaven as people are all around where we meet him in the air. Instead of an angelic host, there will be the Archangel's voice, trumpets sounding and a shout of command announcing his arrival (1 Thess. 4:16-17). Jesus will arrive as the Son of God—the risen Christ! I am anticipating with excitement the day Jesus comes again! Are you?

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Father God, You have shown us your love in the birth of your son Jesus at Bethlehem. You continue to love us each day and promise us he will come again – in your glory, in the clouds, in celebration of our salvation. Guide us as we plan our days and keep us ever ready for Jesus' return. Amen.

– Debbie Simm

Dec. 6

SOMEWHERE TO LAND

“When Jesus arrived and saw a large crowd, he had compassion for them and healed those who were sick.”

– Matthew 14:14 (CEB)

In this passage, Jesus had just learned of the death of John the Baptist, and was seeking solitude and comfort in His Father. Yet, when He approached the crowd following Him, He realized that they had nothing to eat and many were ill. It was His great compassion for those in need which led to the miracle of feeding the 5,000.

On the way to our own healing, we need to be a blessing to others so that they may heal as well. God’s Word says that “those who refresh others will themselves be refreshed” (Proverbs 11:25 CEB). He sent the Holy Spirit to be Our Comforter. David writes in the psalms that “The Lord is close to the brokenhearted” (Psalm 34:18 CEB). He is God, our healer, Jehovah-Rapha. He beckons the weary to Him for rest (Matthew 11:28). God is so good, he cannot do evil, and darkness cannot exist in Him (1 John 1:5). He hastens to the needy, and rewards those who seek Him in times of trouble and sadness. During Advent, as we prepare for His coming, seek Him for comfort when our hearts are troubled, and comfort others as He would do for us.

– Shannon Sloan

Dec. 7

TREE LIGHTING

Igrew up in a small town, population 1,350. Every year on Main Street, first weekend in December, there is a tree lighting party full of tradition that still goes on today. We all had jobs to do to prepare for this party. Our Girl Scout troop would paint the firehouse windows with holiday items or scenes. The volunteer fire crew would get the firehouse ready for the party. Various families made appetizers, desserts or provided punch and hot chocolate. One special lady made these wonderful Santa Claus cookies, for only the kids, they were larger than our hand and sweet and melted in your mouth.

This was a special night where all no matter which of the three churches you were a part of or none, we were all together under the stars to honor the Advent season. Each of the ministers or priest took turns each year to give a devotion and prayer and we were all united in the love of Jesus Christ.

“May the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all.” – 2 Corinthians 13:14 (NIV)

Tradition, “a long-established custom or belief that has been passed on from one generation to another.” A childhood memory brought back by special Santa cookies becomes more meaningful as I grew in my faith and understanding. I brought my kids back to this tradition one year and looking around at people I knew growing up

and thought how tradition reaffirms my history and walk with God. Traditions are meant to help remember and confirm your relationship with a past and present God.

“I praise you for remembering me in everything and for holding to the traditions just as I passed them on to you.” – 1 Corinthians 11:2 (NIV)

– Erin Bills

*See the rest!
Pick up your copy
in the Aldersgate
greeting area!*