

Day 15: Read Hebrews 10:10-18

“For by one offering He has perfected for all time those who are sanctified.” (Hebrews 10:14 New American Standard Bible)

Mom always said, “God gives you what you need when you need it – not necessarily what you want.” That has rung in my ears when difficulties arose.

Money was very tight as a single mom and I was wondering how I was going to supply any gifts and a nice Christmas meal for my twin boys. I went to the grocery store after work and was given an envelope. The owner said it had been dropped off for me. Inside was a \$150 gift certificate! When I got home, Alex’s mom called explaining Alex had asked if Justin and Greg could accompany them on their skiing/snowboarding vacation for five days in Wisconsin over the Christmas break – all expenses paid! I just needed to watch their new puppy. I went to clean offices that night, and there was a note that an eight pound ham was in the refrigerator for me - Merry Christmas. I was so humbled, I just sat down and cried. God had supplied all my needs within a three-hour span.

As I have aged, my needs have decreased as I try to be open to God’s promptings of generosity. Choosing to be an anonymous “gift certificate” gives me sheer joy and fills me with gratitude that I have the ability to do so. Be the messenger of joy this Advent. God gives us what we need, when we need it. His gift was forgiveness and eternal life through His son Jesus, our redeemer. Spread hope, love, and gratitude along your life’s path.

Patty VerDouw



2018 Advent Devotional - Week Three

Day 11: Read Isaiah 11:1-9

“He shall sense the truth by his reverence for the Lord; He shall not judge by what his eyes behold, nor decide what his ears perceive” (Isaiah 11:3 TNK).

God knows our deepest thoughts. We can’t hide no matter how hard we try. In many ways, God knows us better than we know ourselves. On the flip-side, no one can know us as intimately. That doesn’t stop us from attempting to judge, label and categorize others based on what we see and hear, however.

I once came within thirty minutes of breaking up with a boyfriend (now my husband). He promised to show up at six but didn’t arrive until over an hour and a half later. Being burned by a previous boyfriend with consistent lies, I didn’t trust anyone at the time.

If I hadn’t waited, I never would have learned why he was late: A friend’s car had broken down, so he and his brother helped fix it.

Strengthening relationships comes from looking deeper into a person — why they do what they do and say what they say. While I initially believed my boyfriend was off doing something selfish without regard to my feelings, in truth, he was being a good friend to someone else.

Scripture like the verse above shows us the importance of looking beyond and beneath what we see and hear. It is so important to give people the benefit of the doubt and search for truth instead of jumping to conclusions.

Andra Marquardt

Day 12: Read Hebrews 13:7-17 and Psalm 130:5

Hebrews 13:15 speaks of the sacrifice of praise. You might also be familiar with the bouncy little tune of the same name and topic, “We Bring the Sacrifice of Praise” by Kirk Dearman. This melody evokes joy; the spirit that we should have as we give. Yet, I halt at the word sacrifice. What sacrifice must we make to praise the Lord?

I have experienced great joy when I have given sacrificially, when I have had to trust God to lead the path rather than one I had mapped. Pastor Kermit Culver advised Christians to give until it felt good, not until it hurt as some postulated. The scriptural guidance seems even more straight-forward though, as direct as the tune.

I believe this is the point. Christ made the sacrifice. He paid the ultimate and total price. We are only asked to receive this gift. Earlier the text of Hebrews 13:9 declare, “It is good for our hearts to be strengthened by grace.” Thus, the only sacrifice required is to accept Jesus’s grace sacrificed through his blood.

Today’s devotional challenge is simple after all. Accept His grace and forgiveness. Give Him praise and thanksgiving. We might all work to master this declaration. Surely Christ welcomes our adoration and praise. Let us praise Him in all we do today.

Kenton Carlson

Day 13: Read Jeremiah 31:31-34

“I will put my teaching into their utmost being and inscribe it on their hearts. Then I will be their God, and they shall be my people. No longer will they need to teach one another and say to one another, “Heed the Lord”; for all of them, from the least of them to the greatest, shall heed Me--declared the Lord. For I will forgive their iniquities and remember their sins no more” (Jeremiah 31:33-34 TNK).

This passage reminds me of a favorite New Testament passage: “For His invisible attributes, namely, His eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly perceived, ever since the creation of the world, in the things that have been made. So they are without excuse” (Romans 1:20 ESV).

Not only did God write His word on our heart but showed us His divine nature in all of His creation, including us. We are, as Paul noted so succinctly, without excuse. We cannot claim to not know Him, nor can we provide excuse when we don’t heed Him (although we do try, don’t we?).

Sounds a bit scary when I put it that way. I am not innocent, nor am I ignorant. I can therefore be judged more harshly for my actions, because I indeed knew better.

By the same token, however, I am not without hope. None of us are, because although we are — subconsciously if nothing else — aware of God and His will, He still forgives. Even better, He will remember our sins no more.

Assuming, that is, we accept the gift that is Jesus.

Andra Marquardt

Day 14: Read 2 Corinthians 8: 1-15

One of my favorite parts of our church is how we follow God’s teachings on giving. In 2 Corinthians, we find the people of Macedonia being applauded by Paul for not only giving but giving beyond their ability. Have you ever had the feeling that God was calling you to give to a person or organization, but you weren’t sure if you could afford it? Legacy does this in a way every year with our Half-A-Christmas offering. Most churches rely on the Christmas service offerings to cover a good portion of their annual budget. We say that we as a church practice “extravagant generosity,” and we show this by giving away that Christmas offering.

We have tried hard to practice this same kind of generosity in our house. With a couple job changes in the last four years, our income has fluctuated. We moved from a community that benefited from the oil industry and our salaries reflected it. We knew we would have to figure out a way to live on far less when we took new jobs to be closer to family. We managed our expenses and cut back in several areas, but the one area we did not cut back on was our giving. We felt God was calling us to give to the organizations we were giving to and we didn’t want to stop that giving. In fact, by budgeting and battling that consumer mindset, we have been able to give more than we were when our income was higher. Thank you, Legacy, for showing my family the importance of giving.

Jeremy Skoglund