

Good News Daily

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Sunday, December 16

Hebrews 12:18-29 *No, you have come to Mount Zion, the city of the living God... You have come to the assembly of God's firstborn children... to God himself... to the spirits of the righteous ones... to Jesus... to the sprinkled blood, which speaks of forgiveness instead of crying out for vengeance like the blood of Abel. (vv.22-24 NLT)*

Any real estate agent worth their salt will tell you that, when it comes to buying property, there are three unbreakable rules: "Location. Location. Location."

The unknown writer of the Letter to the Hebrews gives us a tantalizing glimpse of the "Heavenly Real Estate" that Christ's blood has bought for us. It's a premiere neighborhood—just check out the list above. But the thing that stands out to me is that Christians "have come to Mount Zion." In other words, we have already arrived and are supposed to be living in this highly desirable location. So why are so many choosing to live in spiritual squalor?

Jesus has handed us the keys. It's time to move in.

Isaiah 13:6-13; Psalm 63; John 3:22-30

ANGLICAN CYCLE: Pray for Kivu - (Rwanda) The Rt Revd Augustin Ahimana

DIOCESAN CYCLE: St. Stephen's Episcopal Church, Harrisburg, The Rev Timothy A. Goodman, Priest in Charge; Kaliua Deanery, Tanzania, Rev. Nason Muhuta, Rural Dean; the Mission of Santas María y Martha de Betania, Ilo, Peru, Rev'd Victor Condori, Vicar.

Monday, December 17

2 Peter 1:1-11 *By his divine power, God has given us everything we need for living a godly life. We have received all of this by coming to know him, the one who called us to himself by means of his marvelous glory and excellence. And because of his glory and excellence, he has given us great and precious promises. These are the promises that enable you to share his divine nature and escape the world's corruption caused by human desires. (vv.3-4)*

Several years ago, a credit card company ran commercials with the tag line "What's in your wallet?" These ads featured people running into terrible situations, including Vikings, because they were not prepared for life's troubles by opening an emergency credit account. I doubt anyone actually believed that a credit card could stop Vikings, but the commercials made a good point. Eventually, everyone is going to face unexpected disasters, so it's a smart move to prepare for hard times in advance.

Peter's second letter was written during a time when Christians were persecuted, by external enemies, worldly temptations, and false teachings. But the apostle reminds his little flock that "He has given us great and precious promises" that enable them to "escape the world's corruptions."

The promises of Jesus were in their wallets. What's in yours?

Isaiah 8:16—9:1; Psalms 41, 52; Luke 22:39-53

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Tuesday, December 18

Luke 22:54-69 *At that moment, the Lord turned and looked at Peter. Suddenly, the Lord's words flashed through Peter's mind: "Before the rooster crows tomorrow morning, you will deny three times that you even know me." And Peter left the courtyard, weeping bitterly.* (vv.61-62)

The deepest pockets in my "sin suitcase" are filled with "Sins I do to God". I mean, I do pack the usual "Sins done to me" (need something to complain about), but they pale beside the sheer volume of sins contained in the first pocket. The guilt associated with "Sins I do to God" is extremely heavy, and harder to get rid of than a well-tossed boomerang.

Peter knew this. When he snuck into the crowd to find out what happened to Jesus, he didn't think twice about denying him. Peter thought he was smart—lying was the easiest way to find out what was happening to Christ. Peter might have even convinced himself that Christ would approve his cleverness, until Jesus turned and looked at him. Then Peter's betrayal come crashing down on him, and he wept bitterly. I suspect he wept for a very long time.

But Jesus forgave Peter, just as he forgives anyone who honestly repents and asks for forgiveness. This is not a burden anyone needs to bear. Not Peter, not me, and definitely not you.

Isaiah 9:1-7; Psalm 45; 2 Peter 1:12-21

ANGLICAN CYCLE: Koforidua - (Ghana, West Africa) The Rt Revd Felix Odei Annancy

DIOCESAN CYCLE: Robert D. Harmon, Mt. Vernon, Ordination to the Priesthood.

Wednesday, December 19

Mark 1:1-8 *"He is a voice shouting in the wilderness, 'Prepare the way for the Lord's coming! Clear the road for him!'"* (v.3)

“Extra, Extra! Read all about it!” “Breaking News!” We’ve all seen these news spots teasing about the “Big Story Coming Soon.”

John the Baptist was the first to report on Christ’s coming. First-century Judea had lots of “so-called Messiahs”, and it’s understandable that the priests were getting weary of hearing about yet another Savior. But God has a way of choosing unlikely messengers for His message, and the smelly Wildman with the weird diet “scooped” all the excessively credentialed religious elites of his day on the “Biggest Story Ever Told.”

When I judge by appearance rather than character, I think about John the Baptist. Good News can come in unexpected packages.

Isaiah 9:8-17; Psalm 119:49-72; 2 Peter 2:1-10a

ANGLICAN CYCLE: Kollam - Kottarakkara - (South India) The Rt Revd Dr Oommen George;

Krishna-Godavari - The Rt Revd George Cornelious Tanteputi

DIOCESAN CYCLE: O Father, help us to discover the realms of your love and to show this love daily in our labor for thee.

Thursday, December 20

Psalm 50 *“I do not need the bulls from your barns or the goats from your pens. Make thankfulness your sacrifice to God, and keep the vows you made to the Most High.”* (vv.9, 14)

Too often, I practice “Resume Theology”. This is where I fill out my Christian resume with all the good and worthy stuff I’ve done, and present it to Jesus for hiring approval. But this is not what God cares about.

Psalm 50 shows the Israelites doing the exact same thing. They “padded” their righteousness resumes with nifty bulls and goats, while neglecting to bring the “thankfulness” and “honoring vows” that our beloved Most High really prizes. It’s not about *my* accomplishments. It’s about my thankfulness for *His* accomplishments.

Isaiah 9:18—10:4; 2 Peter 2:10b-16; Matthew 3:1-12

ANGLICAN CYCLE: Kondoia - (Tanzania) The Rt Revd Given Gaula

DIOCESAN CYCLE: James O. Cravens, Sherman, Ordination to the Priesthood

Friday, December 21

Psalm 54 *Come with great power, O God, and rescue me! Defend me with your might. Listen to my prayer, O God. Pay attention to my plea.* (vv.1-2)

Christmas is almost here—a time of joy, goodwill, and utter panic. Yes, you read that right. I’m triggered by tinsel, hounded by holly, and bullied by silver bells. I’m so busy “doing” for Christmas that I hardly have time for “being” with Christ. I’m not proud of it, but it’s the truth.

In Psalm 54, David is terrified at being hunted by Saul. And, while I doubt that the king's minions were packs of teeth-gratingly cheerful Holiday Elves, I can still relate. When David was overwhelmed, he cried out to God. The Lord restored and encouraged His favorite shepherd boy, just as He restores me during the harried Christmas season. Take that, Holiday Elves!

Isaiah 10:5-19; Psalm 40; 2 Peter 2:17-22; Matthew 11:2-15

ANGLICAN CYCLE: Kongor - (Upper Nile, South Sudan) The Rt Revd Gabriel Thuch Agoth Deng

DIOCESAN CYCLE: Feast of Title for: St. Thomas', Glen Carbon; and St. Thomas', Salem; Elliott Blackburn, Mason City, IA and Mary Christine "Mollie" Ward, Bloomington, Ordination to the Priesthood; Wedding anniversary of The Rev. George W. and The Rev Sylvia L. Howard, Mt. Vernon.

Saturday, December 22

Isaiah 10:20-27 *But though the people of Israel are as numerous as the sand of the seashore, only a remnant of them will return. The LORD has rightly decided to destroy his people. (v.22)*

Isaiah's terrifying prophecy of Israel's winnowing by the Assyrians might seem an odd choice for a Christmas reading, but I think it is perfect. The Lord Almighty smites His own people in this passage—a jarring image when compared to the God “who so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son.” But this passage importantly reminds us that the “road to Jesus” was not an easy one. The Lord had been carefully shaping His Hebrew children for centuries until they were ready to receive His most precious son in human form.

When I look at the crèche, I remember the thousands of years of tough, painful, and sometimes bloody preparation God put in to make that glorious life happen. It wasn't an easy birth. But it was a very good one.

Psalm 55; Jude 17-25; Luke 3:1-9

ANGLICAN CYCLE: Kontagora - (Lokoja, Nigeria) The Rt Revd Jonah Ibrahim

DIOCESAN CYCLE: Birthday of Meredith Moses, Troy, widow of Richard H. Moses, Priest.

by Ruth Owen

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Pray for the sick and those in distress: Charlie, Jenna A., Mary, James T., Julie C., Valerie R., Barbara A., Bill B., Ms. Shayne, Diane B., Steve J., Carol D., Debbie T.

Pray for the Faithful Departed:

Pray for those living in nursing homes and other shut-ins: Dale B., Barb W., Daniel T., and Margaret P.

Pray for: The Diocese of Tabora, Anglican Church of Tanzania, The Rt. Rev. Elias Chakupewa, the clergy and people. The Missionary Diocese of Peru, The Rt. Rev. Alejandro Mesco. Fr. Kari Marcelle, the clergy and people of Holy Trinity St. Vincent. Fr. Dave and all clergy, for whom we light the candle on the west side of the Altar