

HELPFUL THOUGHTS

It's so wonderful to study the prophets during Advent. Throughout these pages, godly men are pointing forward and crying out, 'Look what's coming!' at the same time we're looking ahead to celebrate what came: Jesus Christ as a holy infant.

We call Advent a season of Already/Not Yet. Jesus has already come to us once, but He has not yet come again to finally establish His sinless Kingdom on earth. But the prophets lived in a Not Yet/Not Yet time. They knew only as dim foreshadowing the glorious truth that Advent celebrates. I Peter 1:10-12 tells us that the prophets longed to know what we know, longed to see what we have seen.

This Advent season, I challenge you to not take for granted the birth we anticipate, the Gift that prompts us to give gifts, the Light that prompts us to string lights. We are so blessed to have the fullness of Christ laid out before us, bringing out the depths of the beauty of God's word given through the prophets we read.

ABOUT THE COVER IMAGE

'Hope' by Rachel McKie, a sojourner

Inspired by Joel 2

Joel preached to a people who were being punished for their sins. In Chapter 2, Joel warns the people that the Day of the Lord is coming, and soon! It will be a day of blackness that conquers like an army, fire that leaves a wasteland behind it, and fear for the people who see that day. "The Day of the Lord is great and very awesome; who can endure it?" Joel asked (v.11b). But then, the Lord speaks into the fear and destruction and calls for repentance from the people of God. God asks his people for a true turning from their sins; he asks them to rend their hearts and not just their garments. Joel pleads with the people to return to the Lord, who is full of mercy and grace - he might even bless them! The people repented and God had mercy. The Lord will restore the years that were destroyed because of sin and He promises to pour out his spirit on his people.

This piece depicts God bringing hope to his people in the midst of their sin and destruction. The day of the Lord's judgment will be very awesome indeed, and full of dread for those who are not in God's family. The heart of Israel broke over their sin and God reached down to give mercy and grace to them and to bring peace and order to their turmoil, suffering and chaos. Even though Israel had seasons of repentance, they had hearts of stone and needed hearts of flesh. Praise God that he can pour out his spirit on us and give us hearts of flesh that can be molded into his likeness. Through Jesus, we have a sure and eternal hope!

FIND THE DEVOTIONAL ONLINE

www.devo.sojournchurch.com



930 Mary Street
Louisville, KY 40204
502.635.7053
www.sojournchurch.com

DAILY BIBLE READING AND DEVOTIONAL



BC



FROM CREATION TO THE CROSS

December 7-13, 2009

SCRIPTURAL PRAYER

Holy God, if you had not revealed yourself and your desire for me to be holy on account of your Son's sacrifice, I would run headlong into sin and death. Thank you for blessing me by revealing yourself and lighting the path to follow to Jesus. Amen.
from Proverbs 29:18

DAILY SCRIPTURE READING AND PRAYER

Monday

Hosea 1-3; Psalm 126; Proverbs 29:12-14
Hosea 2:9-10, 14-15

The thought of being exposed, stripped bare in front of what we love can make us feel ashamed and make us wonder why God would do such a thing. But the Lord is clear in verses 14-15 that he intends to use our shame at our nakedness/sin to restore us to himself. He desires to lure us away from everything we cling to for comfort and into the desert of heartache so that he can restore us. Our hearts must be broken in order to be restored to God, otherwise we would continue loving our sin and trying (failing) to please God at the same time. Today, pray that God would give you the courage to face the shame of your sin and follow him into the desert where has many blessings in store for you through your faith in Jesus Christ.

Tuesday

Hosea 4-6; Psalm 127; Proverbs 29:15-17
Hosea 4:1-2, 5:6

Hosea illustrates very clearly our sin and its consequences in today's passages. We have no faithfulness, no love, no acknowledgement of God in our hearts and as a result God has left us and we have absolutely no way to find him. But let this point you to Jesus Christ – He had perfect faithfulness, love and acknowledgement of God, but God forsook Him, not us, on the cross (Matthew 27:46) so that we might be saved. Now, we have Jesus' perfect faithfulness, love and acknowledgement of God credited to us and we have unrestricted access to the throne of God, all through faith in Christ. Claim this promise (or go deeper in your claim) today!

Wednesday

Hosea 7-9; Psalm 128; Proverbs 29:18
Hosea 8:11-14

Working through today's passage backward, we see that God has vowed to punish Israel because they wickedly forgot their Maker. How did they forget their Maker? By practicing hollow religion, by performing religious tasks without their heart in them. We can easily fool ourselves, as Israel did, into thinking that we are spiritually secure before the holiness of God because we do a certain set of duties and don't do a certain set of sins, but throughout the Scriptures, God repeatedly affirms that he wants our hearts, and that our religious actions and good behavior are meaningless apart from truly seeking after him. Today, guard your heart against the numbness of religion practiced apart from the warming presence of Jesus in your life.

Thursday

Hosea 10-14; Psalm 129; Proverbs 29:19-20
Hosea 14:1-3

The Scriptures have often instructed us to return to the Lord, but today let's focus on a clear pathway to do so. Let the phrase, 'take words with you,' turn over in your mind, and remember that your words overflow from your heart. Then consider the instruction to ask God for forgiveness, confessing that it's his grace that receives you. Remember that in Jesus Christ we

the complete picture of God's forgiveness that Hosea didn't have, so these words take on new meaning. Today, meditate on this sincere, vocal pathway to being restored in God's sight and pray that God would help you grow to walk it more and more deeply.

Friday

Joel; Psalm 130; Proverbs 29:21-22
Joel 2:12-17

Again the prophets underscore that returning to the Lord is a pathway of the heart and not a pathway of ritual. Feast on Joel's proclamation that God is gracious and compassionate. Hear the urgency of the call to return to him: everyone should come immediately, regardless of their circumstances. Mother's should bring nursing children; young people celebrating one of the biggest turning points in their life, their wedding day, should drop everything to return to the Lord. Remember that you urgently need life with God, and if you whole-heartedly come to him without hesitation, no matter where you come from, his Son is waiting to receive you and make you new.

Saturday

Amos 1-5; Psalm 131; Proverbs 29:23
Amos 3:7

Amos is a great book filled with bleak yet beautiful poetry about God and Israel, but today just consider this one nugget of truth: the Sovereign Lord does nothing without revealing his plan to his servants the prophets. God reveals himself and his plans to his servants who then reveal them to his people, to us! If you wonder if God has revealed his will to you, he has. He hasn't revealed the play by play of your life, he has revealed the lost-ness of your heart, how to be made right again, and how to grow in godliness, all in his written Word. In sorting out your day-to-day life, trust that if you need wisdom, you should ask God for some because his Word promises he will give it, and trust that if you seek God where he can be found – revealed in the Scriptures – you will find him.

Sunday

Amos 6-9; Psalm 132; Proverbs 29:24-25
Amos 6:1-8

Amos carries a strong theme of injustice and God's fierce anger toward it, opening with a declaration of God's anger against all the nations, one by one, because of how they trampled people in their lust for an expanded kingdom. In Amos 6:1-8, it is revealed that pride and loving other things more than God has led to Israel acting unjustly. When you put love of anything other than God above your love of God, then you will act in ungodly ways in order to have what you prize and this is tragic. Today, consider what it takes for you to be who you want to be and lay that before God's throne and ask him to reveal what things you love more than your Creator and for instruction in loving him in a way that causes godly actions to overflow into all nooks and corners of your life.

BENEDICTION

O come, o come, Emmanuel! And ransom captive Israel!

