

Nudges of the Spirit

Meditations for December 3rd to December 9th



Nudges of the Spirit is currently a ministry of Deacon Carolyn Quinnell, Sandy Freiberger and Denise Bersos.
This week's selections have been written by Carolyn.

Sunday, December 3rd Isaiah 64:1-9 / Psalm 80:1-7, 16-18 / 1 Corinthians 1:3-9 / Mark 13:24-37 *(written by Carolyn)*

1 Corinthians 1:4 *I give thanks to my God always for you ...*

Welcome to a new (church calendar) year. Today is the first Sunday of Advent, a season where our focus is on preparing our hearts and minds for the coming of Christ. It's also a time to give thanks for the many blessings our Lord has given us. Today I would like to say "thank you" to all our readers of Nudges; for without you there would be no ministry of daily thoughts and meditations. I would also like to thank those who have contributed their thoughts and words to these pages over the past four years, as well as those who have worked behind the scenes editing and posting on Facebook. So, consider this a great big hug from me to all of you! May you (readers and workers alike) be strengthened to continue to do the work the Lord has given you to do; and may you be a blessing to those with whom you come in contact.

Thank you, Jesus. Amen.

Monday, December 4th Amos 2:6-16 / Psalm 1, 2, 3 / 2 Peter 1:1-11 / Matthew 21:1-11 *(written by Carolyn)*

2 Peter 1:3 *His divine power has given us everything needed for life and godliness, through the knowledge of him who called us by his own glory and goodness.*

N.T. Wright says in his commentary on 2 Peter that, "All too often, people think that 'religion', or even 'Christian faith', is about what God wants from us – good behavior, renunciation of things we like, a gritted-teeth morality of forcing ourselves to behave unnaturally." As Peter writes in the verse above, God has already given us everything we need to become the individuals we are meant to be in Him. Let that sink in for a minute. It's not so much about what we are "doing to become good Christians," as it is about saying "yes" to the One who already loves us more than we can imagine. It's about wanting to spend time with Him while turning away from the temptations of the world. The Lord has planted the seed of Christian life and faith in us, the question is, "Will we nourish that seed or let it wither?"

Lord, may you find fruit within me. Amen.

Tuesday, December 5th Amos 3:1-11 / Psalm 5, 6 / 2 Peter 1:12-21 / Matthew 21:12-22 *(written by Carolyn)*

2 Peter 1:16 *For we did not follow cleverly devised myths when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but we had been eyewitnesses of his majesty.*

At the healing conference we attended a couple of months ago the speaker called forth anyone who was having pain in their back. She also called forward anyone who had a hard time believing God would use them to be vessels of His healing grace. She then had those in pain hold out their legs and they all had one leg shorter than the other. Next, she had the doubters take the legs of the one in pain and ask God to even them out – make their legs the same length. It happened for each of the dozen or so people there, and they all testified that the pain they had been experiencing had subsided. That is the power of direct experience and eyewitness accounts. Peter, James and John had been given the very special gift of seeing Jesus in His transformed glory on a mountain and now, as Peter was fast approaching his own departure from this world, he was still proclaiming Jesus as God's Son.

Thank you, Jesus, for the healing of the people at the conference and for the eyewitness accounts of your disciples. Amen.

Wednesday, December 6th Amos 3:12–4:5 / Psalm 119:1-24 / 2 Peter 3:1-10 / Matthew 21:23-32 *(written by Carolyn)*

Matthew 21:23 *When he entered the temple, the chief priests and elders of the people came to him as he was teaching, and said, "By what authority are you doing these things, and who gave you this authority?"*

People in authority don't generally like "some young whipper snapper" coming in and messing with their system, even if the outside person isn't necessarily younger than they are. So yes, I can see why the chief priests and elders would be upset with Jesus. They had studied and worked hard for years to be in their position, and along comes Jesus, who had no formal training that they knew of, and was messing with the status quo. In addition, keep in mind there were other people at the time who also claimed to be the messiah. As responsible leaders it was their job to silence the false prophets. Unfortunately, because Jesus did not fit their preconceived notion of what the Messiah would look like, they were unwilling to accept His intervention. So, what is a takeaway lesson for today? Perhaps, as scripture tells us: welcome the stranger into your midst, because you never know when you will be entertaining angels.

Come, Lord Jesus, into our midst and open our eyes to see you. Amen.

Thursday, December 7th Amos 4:6-13 / Psalm 18:1-20 / 2 Peter 3:11-18 / Matthew 21:33-46 *(written by Carolyn)*

2 Peter 3:15b-16 *So also our beloved brother Paul wrote to you according to the wisdom given him, speaking of this as he does in all his letters. There are some things in them hard to understand, which the ignorant and unstable twist to their own destruction, as they do the other scriptures.*

The selection above reminds me of the danger of taking words out of context. I had a friend who was a former seminary professor who used to tell his students, "Context determines content." Often it is the words around a statement in question that puts the correct emphasis on what is being said. For instance, if all you read was that Peter felt there are some things in Paul's letters that are hard to understand, you would miss the fact that Peter believed that beloved Paul wrote according to the wisdom given to him from above. The comment about being hard to understand might be considered derogatory unless you also catch the first sentence. What lesson might we learn here? Possibly to take words in their context instead of "cherry picking" out what we want to hear?

Jesus, help me to hear and listen as you would have me do so. Amen.

Friday, December 8th Amos 5:1-17 / Psalm 16, 17 / Jude 1-16 / Matthew 22:1-14 *(written by Carolyn)*

Psalm 17:8 *Guard me as the apple of the eye; hide me in the shadow of your wings, from the wicked who despoil me, my deadly enemies who surround me.*

I will admit I read the beginning of this verse as, "Guard me as the apple of **your** eye..." twice before I noticed the word was "the" not "your". Who among us would not want to be regarded as the apple of God's eye? This reminds me of a Jeopardy episode where the contestants were paired with relatives whom they considered good friends. Two cousins were there who stated they liked visiting their grandma together because then they could convince her that they were her favorites. I wonder what grandma thought when she heard that comment? Likewise, I wonder what God thinks when we portray ourselves as being a favorite child. I think I'll settle for a term that covers all of us: beloved.

Thank you, Abba, for loving us. Amen.

Saturday, December 9th Amos 5:18-27 / Psalm 20, 21:1-7(8-14) / Jude 17-25 / Matthew 22:15-22 *(written by Carolyn)*

Jude 17-18 *But you, beloved, must remember the predictions of the apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ; for they said to you, "In the last time there will be scoffers, indulging their own ungodly lusts."*

Who do we deem to be an authority and therefore listen to? I've heard the term "fake news"; in addition, I believe there are things written on the internet that are not exactly truthful. So, how do we determine if what we read or hear is accurate? In terms of the early believers, the author of Jude reminds his readers to recall what the first apostles of Jesus taught them. They are the eyewitnesses and therefore bring accurate accounts of Jesus. All others are operating on either handed down knowledge or misinformation. We would do well to remember the lesson today as well. What is the authority of the one speaking?

Lord, direct my listening so that I may hear your voice. Amen.

