

Nudges of the Spirit

Meditations for December 7th to December 13th



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

Sunday, December 7th (2nd Sunday of Advent) Isaiah 11:1-10 / Psalm 72:1-7, 18-19 / Romans 15:4-13 / Matthew 3:1-12 (*written by Carolyn*)

Isaiah 11:1 *A shoot shall come out from the stump of Jesse, and a branch shall grow out of his roots.*

Promises. There used to be a time when a person's word was as binding as any contract written today; all it took was a handshake between two people to make an agreement valid. Have you ever made a promise you could not keep? Or, has anyone ever made you a promise that they did not keep? Either way, someone experiences disappointment and maybe even hurt. Expectations are crushed and trust between the two parties is called into question. Our heavenly Father gave us His word that He would send us a Savior. Since He is eternal, we can say, "He did, He has, and He will." In this season of Advent, we celebrate the coming birth of Jesus as an infant in Bethlehem. However, we also celebrate that He is with us now and will continue to be with us in our tomorrows.

Thank you, Jesus. Amen.

Monday, December 8th Amos 7:1-9 / Psalm 25 / Revelation 1:1-8 / Matthew 22:23-33 (*written by Carolyn*)

Revelation 1:7 *Look! He is coming with the clouds; every eye will see him, even those who pierced him; and on his account all the tribes of the earth will wail. So it is to be. Amen.*

This morning my husband and I were out before daybreak. I looked up in the sky and noticed the planet Venus, aka the morning star. It was very bright when I first saw it, but over time its glow seemed to fade as it rose further into the sky, and the sun was closer to peeking over the horizon. (Yes, I know, that neither Venus nor the sun were actually moving; it was the earth rotating.) As I think about this, it occurs to me that I would not have noticed Venus if I had not looked up. Which makes me wonder if I will notice the second coming of Jesus if I don't occasionally look for Him in the clouds. By further analogy, I cannot see the hand of Jesus at work about me today if I only look inward, and never outward. Sometimes I need to get out of my own headspace and see the wonders around me.

Lord, open my eyes that I may see what you would have me see. Amen.

Tuesday, December 9th Amos 7:10-17 / Psalm 26, 28 / Revelation 1:9-16 / Matthew 22:34-46 (*written by Carolyn*)

Matthew 22:34 *When the Pharisees heard that he had silenced the Sadducees, they gathered together, and one of them, a lawyer, asked him a question to test him.*

Imagine the Pharisees and Sadducees as two rival football teams – sort of like University of Florida and Florida State. However, in this game, both teams are up against Team Jesus. Team Sadducees (up first) has tried a play against Jesus and fumbled the ball. Now Team Pharisees sees an opportunity to score. So, Team J (note, just one player on the field) tosses out the ball, but the Pharisees don't make it to the goal line. Instead, they are handed a very nice, compact summary of the Law. Not only did Team P fumble, but both they and Team S decide that perhaps they'll have to go back and study the playbook a bit more. So, what is our lesson for today? If we're going to be on the field with Jesus, make sure we're on His team.

Lord, show me what you would have me do. Amen.

Wednesday, December 10th Amos 8:1-14 / Psalm 38 / Revelation 1:17–2:7 / Matthew 23:1-12 (*written by Carolyn*)

Amos 8:9 *On that day, says the Lord God, I will make the sun go down at noon, and darken the earth in broad daylight.*

The verse above sounds a lot like a solar eclipse; but it also describes very well what happened on the day that Jesus died on the cross. Considering that the prophet Amos was active between the years 760–755 BC, that's centuries before Jesus walked the earth. Yet his verses 8 & 10 of chapter 8 describe the events on what we refer to as Good Friday. On the other hand, the message Amos gives is for us today also. Certainly, there are times in our lives when it seems as though the sun has gone down and everything around us is dark. But we have good news because of what Jesus did on that fateful day almost 2,000 years ago. He has defeated the darkness and will shine His light into our lives – if we will allow Him to.

Come, Lord Jesus, and shine your light into my darkness. Amen.

Thursday, December 11th Amos 9:1-10 / Psalm 37:1-18 / Revelation 2:8-17 / Matthew 23:13-26 (*written by Carolyn*)

Psalm 37:8 *Refrain from anger, and forsake wrath. Do not fret – it leads only to evil.*

In the first eight verses of this psalm the words, “Do not fret” appear three times. Therefore, it would appear that we really are not to fall into the trap of being worried or anxious. That's sometimes easier said than done. Here's a simple example: by my own admission I am not a lover of getting shots. In fact, I generally have to give myself a pep talk every year before I get a flu vaccine. However, this year, when I was already at my doctor's office for a normal check-up, the nurse offered the shot, and I accepted it right away. And guess what, I didn't have time to fret about it AND receiving it did not bother me to the degree it has in past years. That makes me wonder if fretting actually makes a situation worse.

Help me, Jesus, give my anxieties over to you. Amen.

Friday, December 12th Haggai 1:1-15 / Psalm 31 / Revelation 2:18-29 / Matthew 23:27-39 (*written by Carolyn*)

Psalm 31:22b *But you heard my supplications when I cried out to you for help.*

On most mornings I like to begin my day by going through a variation of the morning prayers as found under Daily Devotions for Individuals and Families in the Book of Common Prayer (pg. 137). On one particular morning, however, when my husband and I were up several hours earlier than usual due to a medical test, I had trouble being awake enough to say my prayers. Finally in frustration I said the words, “Help me Jesus.” Not long after that, I realized I had the words to the song “*Create in Me a Clean Heart, O God*” going through my brain like an earworm. I had to smile to myself because those words are taken from Psalm 51. The morning prayers I say begin with that very psalm. Jesus answered my prayers by tickling a music neuron in my brain from back when I sang in the choir. It's important to remember that not all His answers are grand and glorious – but sometimes small little voices.

Thank you, Jesus, for helping me praise you! Amen.

Saturday, December 13th Haggai 2:1-9 / Psalm 30, 32 / Revelation 3:1-6 / Matthew 24:1-14 (*written by Carolyn*)

Psalm 32:5 *Then I acknowledged my sin to you, and I did not hide my iniquity; I said, “I will confess my transgressions to the Lord,” and you forgave the guilt of my sin.*

Bill Gaither wrote a song entitled, “He Touched Me.” The first few lines read: “Shackled by a heavy burden, 'neath a load of guilt and shame. Then the hand of Jesus touched me, and now I am no longer the same.” How true those words are. When we approach Jesus and ask for forgiveness, He lifts the burden we carry from our shoulders. That doesn't mean we're free to go and do the very same thing all over again; but it is a learning experience along with a fresh start. In the Episcopal tradition, we have several methods of confession to choose

from: one on one with Jesus, speaking to a priest or bishop, or the corporate confession during a service. Pick one and may you be changed by the love of Jesus.

Jesus, thank you for your forgiveness. Amen.

