



**Monday 9 December 2024 to
Sunday 15 December 2024**



Monday 9 December 2024

Preparing for peace

by Pastor Tim Castle-Schmidt

But the wisdom that comes from heaven is first of all pure; then peace-loving, considerate, submissive, full of mercy and good fruit, impartial and sincere. Peacemakers who sow in peace reap a harvest of righteousness (James 3:17,18).

Read [James 3:13 – 4:12](#)

As we continue in this liminal space that Advent is (fully prepared, yet not fully revealed), we are invited to walk with one foot already in the new creation, even though the rest of our lives are still well and truly in the first creation – the broken creation. And James encourages us to live in the wisdom that comes from heaven – that which is pure, peace-loving, considerate, submissive, merciful and good fruit-bearing, the impartial and sincere life of living in the new creation now.

You see, as we are immersed in the life of Jesus, we prepare for the next stage of our everlasting lives by allowing the peace of Jesus to flow over our lives *in the present*. And so, as we live (and, therefore, sow) in peace, we prepare the harvest that will be faithful and, therefore, righteous – a harvest whose foundation is non-violent and loving towards all of God's creation.

What a beautiful and fulfilling future (and present) we are called into: one that works towards the peace and liberty of the whole earth and its creatures. In preparing for peace, not only do we pray 'your kingdom come', but we also participate in its self-revelation in the world.

The season of Advent, then, need not just be a passive observance of Jesus' appearing in the feed trough on Christmas Eve, but a reassurance that the advent of the Messiah has come and that (to steal some words from a Howard Thurman poem) our task is: to find the lost, heal the broken, feed the hungry, release the prisoner, rebuild the nations, bring peace among the people and make music in the heart.

Lord Jesus, as we prepare for your entrance into the world again this year, help us prepare the way of peace, the way of the kingdom, as we work for justice, hope and love in this fractured and broken world. Amen.

Tuesday 10 December 2024

Preparing for nothing

by Pastor Tim Castle-Schmidt

Now listen, you who say, 'Today or tomorrow we will go to this or that city, spend a year there, carry on business and make money'. Why, you do not even know what will happen tomorrow. What is your life? You are a mist that appears for a little while and then vanishes (James 4:13,14).

Read [James 4:13 – 5:6](#)

Sometimes, the Christian way of 'preparing' for Jesus' coming is best done by preparing nothing. I'll say that again: Sometimes, the Christian way of 'preparing' for Jesus' coming is best done by preparing nothing. In our busy 21st-century lives, we often allow planning the future to take precedence over living in it. We get so preoccupied with 'having a plan' that we forget about 'having a pray'. Preparing has almost become more important than living.

Not that 'having a pray' is preparing for nothing, but it is letting go of control over the consequences of our choices.

Jesus consistently withdrew from his busy ministry to spend time in prayer and just allow the opportunities of the moment to lead him to a new ministry opportunity. Jesus doesn't appear to do much 'preparing' at all.

Maybe we are being invited to step out of the crazy hustle of our world to allow God to open opportunities for us to find new meaning and ministry opportunities. Therefore, Advent can be a time of true peacefulness where God reveals our plans to us.

Just imagine!

Lord of our days, you invite us to trust and live in you. As we journey through Advent, please help us to rest in whatever you are preparing us for. Amen.

Wednesday 11 December 2024

Preparing patiently

by Pastor Tim Castle-Schmidt

See how the farmer waits for the land to yield its valuable crop, patiently waiting for the autumn and spring rains (James 5:7b).

Read [James 5:7–12](#)

I have just returned to city living after a four-and-a-half-year stint in the country. I had always been a city-dweller, even though I enjoy getting out of the city. Ironic, isn't it?

But, having returned to the hustle and bustle of city life, do you know what strikes me most about the difference between the two?

It is not the ease of access to goods and services. It is not the crisp smell of fresh air. It is not the constant rumbling of traffic and passenger trains or even the crazy time farmers call 'hay season'.

It is how farmers, by and large, respond patiently and graciously to the conditions that life presents: If it's dry, they say, 'The rains will come'. If it's wet, they say, 'At least it's not dry', or 'There's money in mud'.

Typically, I have found that farmers, while they do complain at times, are much more content with the conditions than city-dwellers.

As we prepare for the advent of the Messiah, we can be tempted to wish it were now or even to predict, 'Look at the signs of the times – the end is nigh!'

But, with the confidence of Jesus' irrepressible resurrection (not even death can hold him), we can patiently rest in knowing that all is in God's hands. And as a result, we can live confidently in the future as we work towards the great renewal also.

I love Isaac Watt's great line in his famous Christmas carol: 'Joy to the world, the Lord is come.' It sounds like bad grammar, but it is correct.

Jesus *is* come; he is here and remains here, which gives us the confidence to wait patiently for the fulfilment of the age.

Lord Jesus, when we feel overwhelmed, help us to remain patient. Remind us of your promise to be wherever we are. As we approach this season of life, please give us your peace in all that happens. Amen.

Thursday 12 December 2024

Preparing in prayer

by Pastor Tim Castle-Schmidt

Is anyone among you in trouble? Let them pray (James 5:13a).

Read [James 5:13–20](#)

How often don't we pray in the rear-vision mirror? Something unexpected – even tragic – happens, and we turn to prayer.

And, yet, as we move through the liminal space of Advent – and, indeed, the liminal space between the resurrection and the new creation – we are invited to take every step in prayer.

What a privilege!

We are invited to bring our hopes and concerns to our Father through our Brother, confident we will be heard. We may not receive as we expect; however, be assured we will be heard.

This allows us to prepare in prayer and take every step with the confidence that Jesus is in our shoes with us.

And so, we can prepare in prayer; nothing is out of the question. An upcoming exam – prepare in prayer. An important meeting – prepare in prayer. Finding it hard to get out of bed – prepare in prayer.

Things won't change immediately, but they will change. God promises to listen to the voice of his children.

So, rather than thinking of prayer as something done in the rear-vision mirror, take it with you in every moment.

That's a small thing to do, but a Copernican Shift in your perspective.

Suddenly, God is looking at things through your eyes, and you can glimpse things through God's eyes.

Lord Jesus, the invitation to pray is remarkable in its simplicity yet profound in its effectiveness. Help me to take each step with you in mind today as I learn to prepare in prayer. Amen.

Friday 13 December 2024

Preparing for blessings

by Pastor Tim Castle-Schmidt

Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ (Ephesians 1:3).

Read [Ephesians 1:1–14](#)

To be blessed in the heavenly realms is some kind of shorthand for saying that God is looking with favour on us. God, who is in heaven, looks on us from heaven now and sees us through the eyes of Jesus – he sees us as his own children.

And what do parents do for their children? Provide for their every need. God seeks to bless us from heaven (God's home) in the present (our current home) and then bring us to the new creation (our eternal destiny). All of this is God's blessing that goes with us in every moment. God's blessings are not just fleeting (here for a moment and then gone) but go with us through our lives, which never end.

Our eternal lives do not just begin after death or at the end of time. They start the moment of our baptism into Jesus and when faith is planted within us. We are already living in eternity now!

That means that in every human moment – good or bad – God is at work bringing blessings to our present and extending it into eternity. In our hard times, God is preparing us for blessings in the future. In our good times, God is preparing us for blessings in the future.

How often haven't you thought, 'How am I going to get through this? God is against me', only to look back and see God was preparing you for an unexpected blessing? Because God sits outside of time and space, yet Jesus is present in time and space through the Holy Spirit, God prepares our blessings from eternity but delivers them in time – now.

We are being prepared for God's blessing as we prepare for the blessing of the advent of the Messiah. This liminal time – sometimes called 'the thin space' – is where heaven touches earth right now, as God's blessings are poured upon us here in time and space.

Lord Jesus, in this thin space of Advent, when we are drawn into the mystery of your incarnation, prepare us for the blessings of new life, both now and into eternity. Please help us to rest in you as you journey with us through our every moment. Amen.

Saturday 14 December 2024

Preparing for fulfilment

by Pastor Tim Castle-Schmidt

With joy you will draw water from the wells of salvation (Isaiah 12:3).

Read [Isaiah 12:2–6](#)

Through this week of Advent, we have journeyed into the liminal space in which we walk. Jesus has been travelling with us and inviting us to allow him to prepare us for the future – both in this life and for eternity.

And while we have been focusing on the preparation that has been going on, we have also had glimpses of the full revelation of our eternal life, where we will be in the immediate presence of God, where there will be no more sighing, crying or dying.

And yet, we still live in the present and are invited to participate in Jesus' mission and ministry in the here and now. This means we are invited to see these words of Isaiah, first spoken nearly 3,000 years ago, applying to us now.

We are invited to draw from the 'wells of salvation' in the present even though the fulfilment of this promise is not fully realised until the creation of the new heavens and new earth.

And yet, as we have explored throughout this Advent week, we live with one foot in eternity now, even while our other foot is in the present, broken world. But Isaiah bids us to acknowledge this dual reality as we draw from the wells of salvation with joy and so bring God's salvation into our every moment – our interaction with others, our standing up for what is right and just, and our acting with mercy to those to whom we minister, as this is how we walk humbly with our God (cf Micah 6:8).

We prepare for fulfilment by bringing some of the fulfilment into the present. May our continuing journey, waiting for the baby in the feed trough, continue to surprise us and encourage us to live the fulfilled life in the present.

Lord Jesus, our future is certain in you, and our present draws meaning. Help us draw from the wells of salvation now and share it with the whole world. Amen.

Sunday 15 December 2024

Sharing and caring by Colleen Fitzpatrick

Whoever has two coats must share with anyone who has none, and whoever has food must do likewise (Luke 3:11).

Read [Luke 3:7–18](#)

There's nothing better than the warmth of a good woollen overcoat when the chill breezes are blowing. When I was a university student, I had a duffel coat, which was not uncommon back then. It was purchased from an army surplus store and served me well during my student years. When I graduated, I moved to Adelaide and became involved with Jacob's Ladder – a coffee shop and outreach program in the city run by Lutheran Student Fellowship student types. During one of my times there, I was challenged to give my duffel coat to one of the people who attended Jacob's Ladder. Sharing my spare coat wasn't easy (I had a much more conservative, grown-up overcoat that fitted my newly emerging professional image). The faithful duffel held a lot of memories of my student days. I still remember it fondly.

Was I acting like the kind of person for whom John was advocating? I was somewhat happy to share my 'wealth', but was I really the sort of cheerful giver God loves? (See 2 Corinthians 9:6,7.)

I have learnt a lot about giving from my dad. He was the sort of guy who would help whoever he could, and he loved to give to the church. Dad was a member of the then Finance Council of the District. I am told that he and the others in the group would sit and discuss the needs of the wider church (often until one or two o'clock in the morning). It was not unusual that they would then fund the required initiatives. When my dad died, we were intrigued to read some of the tributes that came to us, and we have never heard the story about why he was remembered by some people. To me, that is the kind of giving advocated in the New Testament – abundant generosity given selflessly and quietly, with no need for public acknowledgement or adulation. It is the sort of generosity I witnessed many times when I was the director at Lutheran Community Care – people giving significant amounts anonymously, others giving numerically small donations that represented a significant part of their income, or the person who faithfully sent a cheque every month, and all we ever knew about them was their name and post office box number. What a privilege it was to acknowledge these cheerful givers!

What a fitting reminder on the third Sunday of Advent, known as Gaudete Sunday or the Sunday for rejoicing. Let's rejoice together in the opportunities we have to give and in all we have been given.

Generous God, thank you for giving us your Son. Open our hearts, so we can give generously to glorify you and help our fellow people. Amen.

Colleen lives in Adelaide with her husband, John. She enjoys reading, writing and keeping in touch with friends and family in Australia and overseas. After growing up in rural New South Wales, Colleen attended university in Sydney and then moved to Adelaide for two years in 1974. After meeting and marrying her husband, she has never left.