

Saturday of Advent II, December 11th

“God is our refuge and strength,
A very present help in trouble.
Therefore we will not fear,
Even though the earth be removed,
And though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea;
Though its waters roar and be troubled,
Though the mountains shake with its swelling.” Psalm 46:1–3

The opening verses of Psalm 46 present a very scary picture. The ground falling away from you, an earthquake so violent that it causes a mountain to collapse into the sea. Those very seas violently pitch and foam, and tall mountains far off crumble before your eyes. Imagine being on the seashore and seeing this take place. I know I would be terrified. Yet the Psalmist is not. Why? Are they so confident in their ability to swim that they can survive those treacherous waters? Are they confident in their invincibility in the face of such dangers? Do they have some sort of impenetrable bunker to flee to? Actually, it's that last one, in a way.

For the Psalmist, God is not the last resort when all other options have been exhausted. He is not the “Hail Mary pass” of the Christian. He is a very present help in trouble. He is really there. He is our refuge and strength. What have we to fear from this world, when we know that this world will pass away? Sure, that mountain that is carried into the sea might take your life, but why are you so scared about losing your life? You have a sure and certain promise that God will raise you from the dead, and that you will never die eternally. One day all those mountains will crumble to dust, and the waters will fade, and God will remake this fallen world. We don't have to fear this because it's all going according to His plan. Until the Bridegroom returns, Amen.

Third Sunday in Advent, December 12th

“Let not mercy and truth forsake you, bind them around your neck, write them upon the tablet for your heart.”
Proverbs 3:3

Our culture has a proverb of its own: If you love something, set it free to see if it returns to you. If it returns to you, it becomes yours forever, but if it doesn't return, then it was never yours to begin with. This sounds beautiful, that if something truly loves you, it will return that love to you. It paints the picture of an effortless love, a love that can't help but express itself and desires always to be together. If you're married, you know this love is a myth. Real love takes work. Real love takes commitment. Real love is exemplified by Jesus' death for us on the cross. Real love is something that you have to fight for. And if you have that, you know that you have to fight to keep it.

Satan is going to want to rip the love of Jesus away from you. He's going to want to separate you from the mercy and truth of Jesus Christ. So don't sit there and let him! Bind them around your neck, so that to get the truth of Jesus's death and resurrection from you, Satan is going to have to choke the life out of you. And if he does, the joke's on him, because death is no bar to the call of Jesus Christ. He has opened the graves for all believers. Write the mercy and truth of Jesus Christ on the tablets for your heart, just like the Word of God was engraved and came down from the mountain with Moses. Don't let the madness of this world tear the mercy and truth of Jesus Christ from you. Keep holding on, keep writing it down, keep praying the Psalms and meditating on the Proverbs. Until the Bridegroom returns. Amen.

Monday of Advent III, December 13th

“For jealousy is a husband’s fury; therefore he will not spare in the day of vengeance. He will accept no recompense, nor will he be appeased though you give many gifts.” Proverbs 6:34–35

Solomon is speaking to his son here about the dangers of having relations with another man’s wife, and how that sort of jealousy is not one that is easily turned aside. Consider though the deeper spiritual reality of adultery, that is, what the worst sort of adultery is. It is the adultery that Israel committed time after time; it is what God and the prophets called, “Whoring after other gods.” It is idolatry.

While Solomon doesn’t have much good to say about the adulterous wife, we know that God is willing to redeem her. Consider the prophet Hosea and his adulterous wife Gomer. He buys her back to be his wife. But what about the man who stole the wife who did not belong to him? There’s no mercy for him. There is also no mercy for the old evil foe, the serpent of old. Satan will not be spared on the day of vengeance.

Not only does Satan tempt the Church, the Bride of Christ, but he also attempted to bribe Jesus away from you: “Again, the devil took Him up on an exceedingly high mountain, and showed Him all the kingdoms of the world and their glory. And he said to Him, ‘All these things I will give You if You will fall down and worship me’” (Matt 4:8–9). Jesus accepted none of it; He was not appeased: “Away with you, Satan! For it is written ‘You shall worship the Lord your God, and Him only you shall serve’” (10). Satan failed to bribe Jesus away from you. You are His and He has bought you with a great price, His precious blood. Nothing will turn away His fury from the enemy who seeks to tear you away from Him. Until the Bridegroom returns. Amen.

Friday of Advent II, December 10th

“Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean;
Wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow.
Make me hear joy and gladness,
That the bones You have broken may rejoice.
Hide Your face from my sins,
And blot out all my iniquities.” Psalm 51:7–9

Psalm 51 is written by David after his dalliance with Bathsheba, his treachery with Uriah, and his confrontation with God’s Prophet Nathaniel. The entire Psalm is filled with the cries of one who has been confronted with his own sinfulness. If you aren’t familiar with the story, read 2 Samuel 11–12. When Nathan confronts David, it is a gut check that it feels as if God’s Law has broken the bones in David’s body. Have you ever been hit by the Law in such a force that it feels that way? That your sin has been revealed, and it’s not just a feeling of sorrow, but of pain and brokenness in yourself? And how do we typically react to that? We usually flee, don’t we? We draw in on ourselves, lock ourselves in our room, and try to shut out the Word of God that is causing us such pain.

David doesn’t do any of that. Instead, he asks God to cleanse him, to wash him, to give David the Gospel. David knows that God alone has the power to forgive sins and to purge away the sins from His children, and so he asks for it. And God does indeed forgive David. God hides His face from David’s iniquities by placing those iniquities on the head of Jesus Christ Himself. God blots them out with the blood of the lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world, just as He does with all of our sins and iniquities. During this penitential season of Advent, when the weight of your sins begins to break your bones, remember God’s promises here and rejoice. Until the Bridegroom returns, Amen.

Thursday of Advent II, December 9th

“Oh, give thanks to the Lord, for He is good! For His mercy endures forever.” Psalm 136:1

Have you ever stopped to think about why the Psalms include the constant return, “For His mercy endures forever?” Psalm 136 is a great lesson in how often we need to be reminded of this. Peter asked how many times he must forgive his brothers, as many as seven times? Jesus responds seventy times seven (Matt 18:21–22). Well, this Psalm isn’t that long, it’s only 26 verses, but it does a good job in hammering home the point of the refrain.

And what is the point of the refrain, really? Why is the response to everything that the Psalmist states “For His mercy endures forever?” Because no matter what happens in this world, God’s mercy, God’s loving kindness, God’s undeserved compassion for us will endure forever. Why did God create the heavens and the earth? Because His mercy endures forever. Why did God deliver Israel from Egypt? Because His mercy endures forever. Why did God overthrow the kingdoms of the promised land and give the land to His people? Because His mercy endures forever. Why did God kill all the firstborn sons of Egypt? Because His mercy endures forever. Why did God send His only Son to die for us on the cross? Because His mercy endures forever. Why is God coming again to judge the living and the dead? Because His mercy endures forever. The truest expression of that mercy is the cross, where Jesus in His mercy took our sins and paid for them, because His mercy endures forever. Cling to that promise, no matter how many times you have to say it to yourself. For His mercy endures forever. Amen.

Tuesday of Advent III, December 14th

“The words of a man’s mouth are deep waters; The wellspring of wisdom is a flowing brook.” Proverbs 18:4

These words of Solomon at first glance seem contrary to our understanding of Wisdom. Something that is wise should be deep, for there are riches hidden in the depths of those wise words. Shallowness is something that is to be avoided, as if its surface meaning is unworthy of our time. Do we not see shallow people as fake? Then why is wisdom a flowing brook? I’ve never heard of the deep waters of a mighty raging brook, have you? No, the most violent adjective used to describe a brook is “babbling,” referring to the sound that the shallow water makes as it swirls and gurgles around the stones in the bed.

Wisdom can indeed be compared to a flowing brook because you can see what wisdom reveals. It’s clear, it’s not muddy. It’s not murky. There’s no hidden monster waiting in the depths of wisdom to swallow you whole and devour your body and soul. The Leviathan cannot hide in a brook. Instead, the clear waters of wisdom reveal to you what wisdom always brings to you, Jesus Christ crucified on the cross for your sins. This little stream, this wisdom from on high, is a stumbling block and folly to the rest of the world. This little flowing brook with its clear bottom is so scorned by this world for its shallowness and lack of depth. The world continues to pour forth word upon word, trying to tell you what you must do *now* to extend your life. This message pushes those who listen to it down to the depths and drowns them. Wisdom leads you beside its gently rolling waters and restores your soul. Listen to the wisdom of God and not to the “deep” things of this world. Until the Bridegroom returns. Amen.

Wednesday of Advent III, December 15th

“Cease listening to instruction, my son, and you will stray from the words of knowledge.” Proverbs 19:27

How hard have you worked to develop your personal devotional muscle? You might be wondering what that even means. Reading the daily Psalms for the Sons of Solomon or Daughters of Wisdom is one example of building up that muscle. It could be reading from the daily lectionary that you find in the Treasury of Daily Prayer or some other devotional book. Perhaps you’re just starting to exercise that muscle as you interact with other Christians who desire the same. Regardless of how flabby or not that muscle is, how easy is it for you to put that necessary exercise aside? How often does something “more important” come up, and our own personal devotion is pushed to the side? To put it into the metaphor of exercise, how easy is it to have a “cheat” day where you skip your exercise for the day?

Eventually one day becomes two days, and two days becomes three, and three becomes a week, and a week becomes a month and so on. How often have we seen this same effect play out these last few years in our Sunday morning services? Cease listening to instruction, and you will stray from the words of knowledge. Yes, faith is a gift that is given to you, not something that you have to do, but if you’re given a kitten for Christmas and refuse to feed it, are you surprised when you wake up to a tiny corpse in its bed? That is why Jesus says, “Man does not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God” (Matt 4:4) So continue to exercise that faith muscle, feed that faith tiger, and whatever metaphor you want to stick here. God’s Word will keep us, for that Word has become flesh. Until the Bridegroom returns. Amen.

Wednesday of Advent II, December 8th

“Blessed is the man
Who walks not in the counsel of the ungodly,
Nor stands in the path of sinners,
Nor sits in the seat of the scornful;
But his delight is in the law of the Lord,
And in His law he meditates day and night.” Psalm 1:1–2

I want you to try this exercise. Every time you read the Psalms in English and come across the word “Law” I want you to stop and speak the verse out loud, but substitute the word “Promise” for the word “Law.” Look at how it affects verse two, “But his delight is in the promise of the Lord, and in His promise he meditates day and night.” Suddenly, this isn’t about someone who knows all the rules and loves to follow rules. It’s about one who loves hearing God’s promises and trusts in them.

But how can you just make this switch? Isn’t that twisting God’s Word? No. The Hebrew word for “Law” here is תורה (Torah). The Torah refers to the first five books of the Old Testament. Now while Leviticus is certainly full of laws, and we’ve got the 10 commandments in Exodus, we’ve also got books full of God’s promises to His people. Consider the promises in Genesis. God promises to send a savior (3:15), to never again flood the world (9:11), to bless the world through Abraham (22:18), and the list goes on and on.

What are the blessings for the one who meditates on the promises of Jesus Christ? That one will not be able to walk in the counsel of the ungodly nor stand in the path of sinners nor sit in the seat of the scornful. The Holy Spirit dwelling in him will have made him a new creation, one who longs to see the promises of God fulfilled, and to hear again and again those promises. The world isn’t going to like that, but God has promised to bless you and will do so. See Matthew 5:1–12 if you still have any doubts. Until the Bridegroom returns. Amen.

Tuesday of Advent II, December 7th

“The Lord brings the counsel of the nations to nothing;
He makes the plans of the peoples of no effect.
The counsel of the Lord stands forever,
The plans of His heart to all generations.
Blessed is the nation whose God is the Lord,
The people He has chosen as His own inheritance.”
Psalm 33:10–12

It’s hard being a Christian in these gray and latter days. We look around and we see evil people constantly getting away with things and getting ahead in life. It’s even worse when we see our own governments trying to make us complicit in their evil, in their open disregard for God’s Word and plan. It can make us feel powerless and defeated.

But regardless of what your government says, you don’t truly belong to it. You have a greater and higher Lord than Caesar or Biden or Trudeau. Your Lord is the God who has made heaven and earth, who has chosen you out of all the nations of the world to be His people. While the nations may take their counsels in secret, thinking that they have hidden their plans and works from Jesus, it matters not. God sees into these secret counsels and brings them to naught. Even if they should succeed in taking your home, your freedom, or even your life, they cannot hold it forever. Just as the grave cannot hold Jesus, this world will not be able to hold you. His plan was always to send His Son, Jesus Christ, to die for our sins, and that plan has worked flawlessly. Now all that remains is for Him to come again, to gather out of all the nations His chosen nation. His plan endures forever, and you are His people and His inheritance. Until the Bridegroom returns. Amen.

Thursday of Advent III, December 16th

“It is honorable for a man to stop striving, since any fool can start a quarrel.” Proverbs 20:3

What do you think Solomon would make of Facebook? You’ve heard it said to you before, we’re addicted to outrage. If we see that someone is wrong on the internet, we must correct them. It doesn’t matter that we’ve never met this person before in our life, and that they’re simply a friend of a friend of an acquaintance of our former roommate. We’re right and so we must sharpen our keyboards and prepare the CAPS-LOCK for deployment. But do we? Do we really HAVE to? Maybe we don’t. Maybe it’s better to put our energy into our neighbor who is right in front of us, instead of those voices that are far away.

Quarrels don’t only happen on the internet; they happen face-to-face too. But is a quarrel simply any argument or disagreement? No, the root word for “quarrel” in our text means “to lay bare”, that is, to lay the teeth bare. In other words, it means to show your fangs. You certainly can argue and discuss and disagree without baring your fangs to one another. Paul said it well in Galatians 5:14–15, “For all the law is fulfilled in one word, even in this: ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’”

But if you bite and devour one another, beware lest you be consumed by one another! When it’s not your vocation to correct the error of a fool, perhaps you don’t have to. It is exhausting to try to correct every fool all the time. The honorable man remembers these words of Jesus: “Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls” (Matt 11:28–29). Until the Bridegroom returns. Amen.

Friday of Advent III, December 17th

“The desire of the slothful kills him, for his hands refuse to labor. He covets greedily all day long, but the righteous gives and does not spare.” Proverbs 21:25–26

How many of us look around our towns and see “Help Wanted” signs in every window of every local business? And why would anyone want to start a new job at this time? You would be constantly understaffed, over-scheduled, and under-supplied. Why go through that hassle and headache if you can simply stay home and watch Netflix and get paid to do that? All the while you can pick up your \$500 smart phone and tweet about how capitalism is evil and that the rich don’t pay their fair share. And don’t get me wrong, this isn’t about making those who cannot labor feel guilty. As Solomon says, this is about the slothful who *refuse* to labor, not who are *unable* to labor. For it has been with us since the fall that labor is part of our sinful world, “Cursed is the ground for your sake; in toil you shall eat of it all the days of your life” (Gen 3:17). Solomon is simply stating the natural consequence of the slothful, the sort of person who can’t be bothered to give the least amount of his life in service of someone else.

But that is not so for the righteous. He gives and does not spare. This is made perfect in Jesus Christ. He, who did not spare His own life, gave it up for all of us. He gives out the labor of His hands in His perfect life that He lived for us. He doesn’t expect us to pay it back, for it is a free gift given from His pierced hands. Given to us because we can’t earn it, not because we aren’t willing to work for it. May our desire be always for the gifts of the righteous one. Until the Bridegroom returns. Amen.

Monday of Advent II, December 6th

“Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path.”
Psalm 119:105

There are only a few things that we truly know. Our enemies may lie to us, our friends may be confused, and even our own senses may betray us. Likewise, the things that we think we know are often just the things we like hearing, especially if presented to us in a nice package by those we admire.

Not so with God.

His word is a lamp to our feet and a light on our path. Praise the Lord, for He has given us a bright beacon to guide our steps by. It is a true sign of the light to come. Those who have spent a night outside in the wilderness know what true darkness is and how much comfort even the smallest of lights can bring. It anchors us in time and space, and by its light we can see the faces of our companions.

This Word perfectly illuminates our way in the dark valley. It does not illuminate everything we might like to know—not all the shadowy nooks and crannies. Some things are only dimly lit. Some things are left in the dark until the light of the last day. It is best not to dwell on these things, but to avoid those dark, unlit paths. Where the Word is, there is life and light. Where the Word is not, no good thing lives.

8. Second Sunday in Advent, December 5th

“I will lift up my eyes to the hills –
From whence comes my help?
My help comes from the Lord,
Who made heaven and earth.
He will not allow your foot to be moved;
He who keeps you will not slumber.
Behold, He who keeps Israel
Shall neither slumber nor sleep.” Psalm 121:1–4

These verses have stuck with me since the very first time that I sung them in choir. I don't know about you guys, but there have been so many times when I have felt very alone, like that I've been abandoned by all my brothers in arms and left to face the charge of the enemy forces alone. So I prepare to stand fast for as long as I can before I'm swept away by a superior force. But then, as I'm at my lowest, I lift up my eyes to the rising sun one last time. Only then I'm greeted by a glorious sight. Not Gandalf arriving, but God Himself. Jesus Christ who made heaven and earth. Jesus Christ who died on the cross for my sins. He stands ready to come to my defense. And before I know it, He's by my side, defending me, giving me the power to stand.

I don't have to worry that one of these times He will be too late, that He will be sleeping and unable to reach me in time before I'm overwhelmed. For He doesn't slumber or sleep. There is no way to take Him by surprise, no way to catch Him unawares. He has promised to keep us, His new Israel. He will not allow a single one of us to be snatched from His hand (John 10:29). So, during these increasingly dark days in Advent, remember that Jesus is your help, and He does not slumber nor sleep. Until the Bridegroom returns. Amen.

Saturday of Advent III, December 18th

“The wicked shall be a ransom for the righteous, and the unfaithful for the upright.” Proverbs 21:18

Have you ever been involved in a group project with someone who doesn't contribute anything? I'm sure we all have experienced this at one time or another. Now what if there was an opportunity to trade one member of your group for a different member of another group? Who would you trade? You're going to get rid of the dead weight and hope that the member they trade to you is at least better than the one you just got rid of. That's simply a good business sense: get rid of your least valuable asset to acquire a more valuable one. But how are you going to convince the wicked to give up their life for the righteous? Or how are you going to convince the traitor to give up his life for the upright? That's perhaps one of the most perplexing things of this proverb. But it happens in ways we don't even notice all the time. A man is called out of sin by the Word of God and repents and turns from his former sinful ways. There's always someone there, ready to take up in his place, giving his life in ransom without even realizing it.

And this, of course, is turned on its head by Jesus. For He, the one who is truly righteous gives His life as a ransom for all the wicked. He who is truly upright and faithful gives his life for every traitor and unfaithful man. Let us pray that those who are wicked and unfaithful will wake up before our Savior comes again, because there will be no more ransom at that point. Until the Bridegroom returns. Amen.

Fourth Sunday in Advent, December 19th

“Most men will proclaim each his own goodness, but who can find a faithful man?” Proverbs 20:6

The English translation for this verse is lacking, but it’s not a fault of the translators. It’s a fault of the language. English, for all its vaunted breadth of meaning, can muddle theology like none other. Perhaps a better attempt to phrase what God through Solomon is saying is this: “Many a man will shout forth his own mercy, but a man of great faithfulness, who can find?” We all know about men and women who shout aloud their own good deeds. After all, what else is social media for? So, if you want to find someone who is willing to show mercy, it would be easy to do so simply by combing through social media and finding a dozen or so.

But how about finding one of great faithfulness? It’s certainly rare in our society, especially in this era of cancel culture and no-fault divorce. How many people are still working at the same company now as when they entered the workforce? How many people are still with the same spouse that they first married? How many people are still attending the same church as the one they grew up in? And if you are all of these things, do you constantly broadcast it to everyone? Do you shout it aloud from the rooftops or post about it daily on Facebook?

Finding a man who keeps the faith, that’s a rare one. So rare, that there was really only one ever who was truly faithful. “For scarcely for a righteous man will one die; yet perhaps for a good man someone would even dare to die. But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us” (Rom 5:7–8). Jesus gives you His faith, so cling to that. Until the Bridegroom returns. Amen.

Saturday of Advent I, December 4th

“There is a river whose streams shall make glad the city of God,
The holy place of the tabernacle of the Most High.
God is in the midst of her, she shall not be moved;
God shall help her, just at the break of dawn.
The nations raged, the kingdoms were moved;
He uttered His voice, the earth melted.
The Lord of hosts is with us;
The God of Jacob is our refuge.” Psalm 46:4–7

Dear Baptized in Christ,
through the faith worked in you by God
you have become the living streams of the Great River;
you are the fruitful branches of the True Vine;
the exultant treasure-field bought with the Pearl of Great Price;
the joyful saplings dwelling in the Verdant Forest.
(John 4:10, 14b; 14:1–8; Ps 96:12; Matt 13:45–46)

When the nations rage and your enemies move to destroy you,
when all looks lost to their wicked machinations on the evil day,
then will your Savior appear:
at the turn of the tide, look to the East—
the Son is rising:
it is they who shall break, it is they the LORD will destroy.

Because the Spirit of the LORD dwells in you.
Thus you are become holy temples—
pillars in the Tabernacle where God dwells,
upon His altar,
among you;
within you by the Great Mystery of His Holy Communion.

Friday of Advent I, December 3rd

“Kings’ daughters are among Your honorable women;
At Your right hand stands the queen in gold from Ophir.
Listen, O daughter,
Consider and incline your ear; ...
Instead of Your fathers shall be Your sons,
Whom You shall make princes in all the earth.” Psalm 45:9–10,
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The world looks at you, dear Christian prince in Christ, and sees only a beggar in rags, an outcast who was bound to the cursed false-father and his godless kings, disinherited from the Fall.

But in truth, all the riches and power of the hegemonies and ruling elites and plutocrats are on loan from you—from the redeemed Kingdom of God, washed clean and graciously dressed in the royal garments of the King. Their wealth and status are given to them by God because of your prayers, and because it pleases God to do so, that they might use their riches and authority to serve His people.

But at the final advent of Jesus, when the work of salvation is consummated, the King will require His wealth back; He will require the world to give an account for these lesser blessings he bestowed on them at the request of His people, and many will be found wanting (Ps 72).

Then will be revealed the greater wealth kept safe in the heavenly places for God’s royal people: not just immortality, but eternity in direct communion with God in the incorruptible new creation, the great reward of faith in Jesus given to us by the Father and preserved by His Holy Spirit. Even more, we will receive what He prepared for us before the foundation of the world:

“Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, Nor have entered into the heart of man The things which God has prepared for those who love Him” (1 Cor 2:9; Isa 64:4).

Monday of Advent IV, December 20th

“The horse is prepared for the day of battle, but deliverance is of the Lord.” Proverbs 21:31

How many of you have ever had to train a horse? While I’ve never done it myself, my mother excelled at it, and now I live in an area where many families have rodeo as a big part of their lives. Horses are not trained overnight. It is a difficult process that takes a significant investment of time, plenty of bruises, and rarely a broken bone or two. Training that same animal for use in war is an extra level on top of that. You have to teach the horse to ignore his instincts and trust in his rider’s commands over and above the instinctual level of self-preservation. Just having a war horse is not enough, of course: the man on the horse himself trains how to fight from horseback. These highly skilled soldiers on trained mounts could easily shift the course of battle with their timely charges.

Solomon reminds us that while it is good for the soldier to be trained and prepared, it is not by his might that Israel would be delivered. It was not by the strength of arms and horses that Pharaoh’s mighty army full of horsemen and charioteers was overcome. It was by the might of the Lord that horse and rider were tossed into the sea. So it is with our deliverance. It is not by our might that Satan is defeated; it was by Jesus’s mighty sacrifice for us on the cross. But that doesn’t mean we should be flabby soldiers not used to training with the Sword of the Spirit (Eph 6:17; Heb 4:12). No, we must prepare to stand firm, to fight, and to win. And know that our victory is of Jesus Christ. Until the Bridegroom returns. Amen.

Tuesday of Advent IV, December 21st

“Do not remove the ancient landmark which your fathers have set.” Proverbs 22:28

How many statues and monuments have been torn down because someone was “offended” by them? “Oh, this man owned slaves, so let’s tear down the monument” goes the thought—never mind that the man actually freed his slaves and provided for them and served his neighbors valiantly. *That* would require some to actually learn history.

But that’s not really what this proverb is talking about. The landmark that Solomon is referring to was the thing that marked the property lines. Dishonest people would very slowly move these markers in order to steal land that wasn’t their own. God is here reminding us through Solomon to be content with what we have been given. We should not hurt or harm our neighbor by getting what is his in any dishonest way or in a way that only appears right (Luther’s Explanation to the 7th Commandment).

I was reading through the book of Kings when I saw a connection to this proverb. Many times in Kings we read of wicked kings who set up altars to Baal and Asherah poles and all sorts of places of false worship. Following them are their sons who clean up after their fathers, tearing down what their fathers had set up. The Holy Spirit made it clear to me: those wicked kings were moving the ancient landmark that God had set with the words, “You shall worship the Lord your god, and Him only you shall serve” (Deut 6:13; Matt 4:10. Their children were merely moving it back to where the Lord had set it. May we all see clearly the ancient landmark that God has set in His Word. Until the Bridegroom returns. Amen.

Thursday of Advent I, December 2nd

“What is man that You are mindful of him,
And the son of man that You visit him?
For You have made him a little lower than the angels,
And You have crowned him with glory and honor.
You have made him to have dominion over the works of Your hands;
You have put all things under his feet.” Psalm 8:4–6

David has moved from praising the Name of the LORD in Psalm 7, who has delivered him from his enemies, to the nature of that Name in Psalm 8. As he sits beneath a clear sky, speckled with tens of thousands of stars, David is moved to consider the Name in connection with the wonders of His creation. Perhaps considering that he is like so many other human specks in the galaxy of humanity, and tinier still in the vast cosmos, David is overawed that the same LORD who created the beauty of the heavens also ordained to create man.

Our translations imply that verse 5 is within the context of rank in the order of sentient beings, but the Hebrew leans more towards the idea of mankind being *fewer* in number than the myriad legions of angels. David is wowed that, despite the immortal and awesome bearing of the angels who also vastly outnumber men, YHWH has seen fit to give dominion over Creation to men.

As David is illuminated through his Psalms concerning the coming of Jesus and the work He will accomplish in the cosmic war, he will come to understand why men are so highly regarded: God will take on human flesh. The Incarnation is the reason men are crowned with glory and honor, even as the true King of Glory will wear a crown of thorns and suffer the ignoble death of being hung on a tree for these same men.

The same Name that delivers His people from their enemies of Devil and death also causes all things to be placed under the feet of those who bear His Name upon their head and heart in Baptism. That means now, not just on the Day of the LORD.

4. Wednesday of Advent I, December 1st

“Make a joyful shout to God, all the earth!
Sing out the honor of His name;
Make His praise glorious.
Say to God,
‘How awesome are Your works!
Through the greatness of Your power
Your enemies shall submit themselves to You.
All the earth shall worship You
And sing praises to You;
They shall sing praises to Your name.’” Psalm 66:1–4

The thing we long for in Adventide is for things to be made right. This includes humble believers being filled with Christ’s forgiveness as the valleys are filled in the path that John the Baptist prepares. It also includes seeing our prideful enemies being made low just as the mountains are flattened on that same path. In Psalm 66, the Psalmist praises God for his powerful and awesome deeds. But before praising God for delivering His people, the Psalmist first praises God that His great power has caused His enemies to “come cringing to [Him]!” Before “cringe” was an internet meme, it was an image of the defeat of the enemies of the Gospel—wicked men unwillingly and shamefully submitting to God Almighty being judged for their unrighteousness, cringing before the Lord.

And this is something we rejoice in. God is just and will vindicate His people. For we are a tried and tested people. Our enemies in this world are “a crushing burden on our backs.” They seek to keep you from worship as a matter of “public safety.” They murder babies still in wombs. They hate you for confessing the truth of God’s created order. But they hated Jesus first and blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness’ sake. So rejoice this Advent! Your Lord has brought you through fire and water to a place of abundance. Christ has come and is coming again! Those who repent before Him are forgiven. Those who remain His enemies receive their due reward. All is made right.

Wednesday of Advent IV, December 22nd

“It is the glory of God to conceal a matter, but the glory of kings is to seek out a matter.” Proverbs 25:2

God likes to hide things from us? And governments like to be transparent? No, that can’t be right. But in a strange, twisted way, it is. Where is God’s glory revealed? It is revealed in Jesus’s death for us on the cross. Where would the glory of a king be revealed? As he sits on his throne. And, in this place, the king does many things, but primarily he judges. It is the glory of the king to see through all the falsehood, all the deceit, all the lies, to the very heart of the matter. Then the truth will be revealed, and correct judgment rendered, to the glory of the king and to the benefit of his people. Solomon displayed such a glory in 1 Kings 3:16–28 where he famously threatened to cut a baby in two to solve a debate between two women, one of whom had lost hers. In his God-given wisdom, he found out the truth and was accorded wise by all Israel.

In contrast to this, we see God’s glory. In the glory of God, in Jesus’ death for us on the cross, Jesus did the ultimate act of concealment. He hid the sins of the world from the face of God forever. He covered them over in His own blood, so now God sees and remembers those sins no more. In the very act of Jesus’s concealing them in His own blood, they don’t remain hidden—they vanish entirely. For if God forgets something, it ceases to exist. It is as if it never was. So, this Advent season, I urge you to confess your sins to the Lord so that He can forgive them and show forth His glory. Until the Bridegroom returns. Amen.

26. Thursday of Advent IV, December 23rd

“The words of the Preacher, the son of David, king in Jerusalem.
‘Vanity of vanities,’ says the Preacher;
‘Vanity of vanities, all *is* vanity.’
What profit has a man from all his labor
In which he toils under the sun?
One generation passes away, and another generation comes;
But the earth abides forever.” Ecclesiastes 1:1–4

The Hebrew word is *hevel*. Typically translated as “vanity,” it is better understood as “meaninglessness” or even “vapor/evanescence.” What does vapor do? Have you ever walked out of a warm house into freezing temperatures? The vapor dissipates almost like it was never there. It is seen one moment, and is gone the next. Vapor of vapors is the world we see around us. The grass grows and withers. Trees sprout, grow, and are cut down. Man is born, toils under the sun, begets or bears another generation, then dies.

All idols perish in this way. Deuteronomy 32:21 connects idolatry with *hevel*: “They have made me jealous with what is no god; they have provoked me to anger with their idols [*hevel*].” Idols are not merely statuettes made with wood, silver, or gold. They are whatever we put our trust in. Can we put our trust in man? You bet! Can we put our trust in ourselves? We are our greatest idol. That which is not of God can become idolatrous. In the end, that which is not of God is *hevel*. It is meaningless vapor. God contains all meaning for us. Christ is the Word who brings meaning into the life we live. Christ is the Wisdom of God who teaches us in Ecclesiastes to strip away the *hevel* from our lives and look at the world with sanctified eyes. For it is this world that will “remain forever”—even if it will be purified with fire on the Last Day as God clears out all the idolatrous *hevel* that we have accumulated upon it.

Tuesday of Advent I, November 30th

“When I kept silent, my bones grew old
Through my groaning all the day long.
For day and night Your hand was heavy upon me;
My vitality was turned into the drought of summer.
I acknowledged my sin to You,
And my iniquity I have not hidden.
I said, ‘I will confess my transgressions to the Lord,’
And You forgave the iniquity of my sin.” Psalm 32:3–5

“I’m not going to be the first to apologize, he is.” That anger eats away at me. It saps my strength. Pretty soon I end up emotionally drained. The anger that was burning as a fuel has burned everything out, and nothing is left. It’s even worse when after some time to think about it, I realized that I was wrong in the first place. It’s all my fault that this whole fight started. It’s all my fault that this distance is between us. But it’s been too long, I can’t apologize now. The rift between us has grown too big, there’s no way for me to salvage this. Now that the anger has burnt out, I’ve got nothing left but the guilt, and it’s crushing weight upon me. Hopefully he will just leave me behind, because I’m no good. I’m a weight dragging him down. I wish that he would just extend an olive branch to me, but I don’t deserve it. It’s all my fault anyway.

I’ve been there. David has been there. You’re scared to even open your mouth to confess your sins, but holding them in is tearing you apart. And actually confess those sins to my pastor? Not a chance. That’s much too frightening, I’d rather just keep it between me and Jesus.

But there’s a reason that God invites us to confess our sins to Him: so that we can receive forgiveness. When we confess our sins to our pastor, we hear out loud Jesus’ own forgiveness spoken to us. He, through our pastor, forgives our sins. With a word Jesus speaks, and through the mouth of His servant we hear. And then we can know for certain. God has spoken, you are forgiven. I am forgiven. Until the Bridegroom returns. Amen.

Monday of Advent I, November 29th

“The Lord said to my Lord,
‘Sit at My right hand,
Till I make Your enemies Your footstool.’
The Lord shall send the rod of Your strength out of Zion.
Rule in the midst of Your enemies!
Your people shall be volunteers
In the day of Your power;
In the beauties of holiness, from the womb of the morning,
You have the dew of Your youth.
The Lord has sworn
And will not relent,
‘You are a priest forever
According to the order of Melchizedek.’” Psalm 110:1–4

The Psalm is referring to Jesus. It is quoted by Him to the Pharisees when He wants to trip them up in their hypocrisy and narrow-minded unfaithfulness. He wants to make the point that He is the One they have been waiting for. Indeed, if they followed that through to conclusion, through faith, they would have their eyes opened: the Lord—the Son—is indeed the same YHWH that the Jewish leaders claimed to honor and worship.

But there is more. You are Baptized into Jesus, the Living Waters. That means you are a member of His Body, so when YHWH says to David’s Lord, Jesus, “Sit at My right hand, Till I make Your enemies Your footstool”, He is also talking to you—to every child Baptized into the Name. You bear His Name. You bear the marks of His crucifixion. It is all counted to you: the holy suffering, the gruesome death, and all the blessings of being a son, a royal heir of the Heavenly Kingdom.

That also means you will be resurrected on the Last Day, as your Lord was. On that day all the enemies of the Kingdom of God—your enemies—will be made your footstool, for the sake of Christ, who has atoned for all your sins. Verse 3 can be read a different way, and it’s worth considering: “In the day of thy power shall princes be at thy side in holy raiment.” The verses of Psalm 110 are your identity in Christ: you are princes.

St. John presents another facet of these verses in the Apocalypse: “Then I looked, and behold, a Lamb standing on Mount Zion, and with Him one hundred and forty-four thousand, having His Father’s name written on their foreheads. ... These are the ones who follow the Lamb wherever He goes” (Rev 14:1, 4). That is you too. Whenever you read the words of this book, and see Jesus, His princes are with Him, bearing witness, taking part in His perfect justice, even judging the angels (1 Cor 6:3), for you are “blameless” before the throne of God (Rev 14:5).

The Nativity of Our Lord, Christmas Eve, December 24th

“The sun also rises, and the sun goes down,
And hastens to the place where it arose.
The wind goes toward the south,
And turns around to the north;
The wind whirls about continually,
And comes again on its circuit.
All the rivers run into the sea,
Yet the sea is not full;
To the place from which the rivers come,
There they return again.” Ecclesiastes 1:5–7

Eastern religions are known for their cyclical beliefs. Hinduism believes in reincarnation, where your soul will be placed into a new being based on how you behaved in this life. Karma is the belief that your good and bad works cycle back to you. Time itself is cyclical in these religions, following a “wheel of time” that rolls over and over. Days repeat with the rise and setting of the sun. Months repeat as the moon waxes and wanes. Years repeat as the seasons come and go. The lives of man are characterized by birth, life, and death, repeating on and anon.

Even as the Bible tells us that history had a beginning and will have an end in eternity, it still recognizes the cycles that God has built into this world. “The sun rises, and the sun goes down” (5). The wind blows south and north and around as God has appointed it. Many of us know of the cycle of water. Rain comes to water the earth, and it flows into creeks, streams, rivers, lakes, and finally the ocean. Evaporation draws water up into the clouds to start the process over again.

God has built cycles into our lives. These include the daily, weekly, and yearly routines that we are familiar with. We ought also to recognize the cycle of life itself that we share with those around us. We will one day tread the steps that those older than us have trod. We will make the mistakes that they have made. Wisdom is found in these experiences. Wisdom is also found in the words of Holy Scripture as God describes how he has made mankind and placed him in His Creation. Cutting through the cycles found within creation is the revealed, linear focus of creation, redemption, sanctification, and consummation of all things.

The Nativity of Our Lord, Christmas Day, December 25th

“I, the Preacher, was king over Israel in Jerusalem. And I set my heart to seek and search out by wisdom concerning all that is done under heaven; this burdensome task God has given to the sons of man, by which they may be exercised. I have seen all the works that are done under the sun; and indeed, all is vanity and grasping for the wind.

And I set my heart to know wisdom and to know madness and folly. I perceived that this also is grasping for the wind. For in much wisdom is much grief, and he who increases knowledge increases sorrow.”
Ecclesiastes 1:12–14, 17–18

The philosopher Socrates was famous for searching for wisdom. His famous phrase “I know that I know nothing” is called the “Socratic paradox.” It comes from this passage where Socrates mocks someone who pretends to know much: “I am wiser than this man, for neither of us appears to know anything great and good; but he fancies he knows something, although he knows nothing; whereas I, as I do not know anything, so I do not fancy I do. In this trifling particular, then, I appear to be wiser than he, because I do not fancy I know what I do not know” (*Apology*, 21d).

Solomon too, being divinely inspired, comes to this conclusion: even great wisdom does not amount to anything “but a striving after wind.” Solomon echoes many of the frustrations of the wise. It is vexing to know what is the wise course of action but then to see many around you pursue foolishness or sin. We grieve when we see people making foolish decisions in the world around us. We grieve when we give good advice to our children only for them to willfully ignore it. The wisdom that Solomon would have us seek is one that recognizes the vanity of earthly wisdom but knows the divine Wisdom who is the Son of God (Prov 8).

First Sunday in Advent, November 28th

“Save now, I pray, O Lord; O Lord, I pray, send now prosperity. Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord! We have blessed you from the house of the Lord.” Psalm 118:25–26

Repent, for your King is coming. He came once in humility, answering the prayer of the Psalmist, the prayers of the Old Testament church. He came as a baby to save you by his perfect life and perfect death, both in your stead, in your place. He comes to you even now in humility, in Word and Sacrament. He comes to answer your prayers, to save you by forgiveness and life. “Baptism ... now saves you” (1 Pet 3:21). He says to his ministers, “Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained” (John 20:22–23). “Take, eat; this is My body. ... Drink from it, all of you. For this is My blood of the new covenant, which is shed for many for the remission of sins” (Matt 26:26–28).

He will come again in glory. That too is a theme of Advent, a continuation from the end of the Church Year. As we wait in a broken world for the consummation of the marriage between Christ and His church, we wait as the Old Testament saints waited. With them, we know what is coming: our Savior. But when he comes again for us, he comes in glory, judge the living and the dead. When he does, may we be found ready to welcome our Lord with more than palm branches: with repentance and faith. “Amen, Even so, come, Lord Jesus!” (Rev 22:20).

The Sons of Solomon Discipline:
The Sons of Solomon is an ecumenical prayer habitus of catholic
Christian men worldwide focused on the Psalms and Proverbs.
We agree on what we all confess: The Three Ecumenical Creeds.
We pray the prayers God gave us to pray, and seek together the
wisdom that is from above.
How?

1. Carry a bible, prayer book, and crucifix with you.
What is a prayer book?

Anything that points you back to the scriptures in your daily life: a
hymnal, catechism, theological book...Anything by which you find
inspiration to open, read and ponder the scriptures
Is this required at all times?

We are not practitioners of Judaism.
"All things are lawful for me, but all things are not helpful. All things
are lawful for me, but I will not be brought under the power of any."
Do not abandon prudence, practice wisdom and discipline.
Let the image of the perfect man be your spiritual focus.

2. Meditate on a Proverb every day.
How might one do that?

Translate the Proverb into your own words. Carry that thought with
you on a piece of paper for a day. Pray that you might use the thought
in a conversation. Leave the note alone for a week, then read it again
and repeat the process. Read, mark, learn, and inwardly digest the
wisdom of the Holy Scriptures. Let the author teach you wisdom, that
you may be thoroughly equipped.

3. Read the Psalms of the Diaspora each day:
Morning: Psalms 123, 125, 127
Mid-day: Psalms 124, 129
Vespers: Psalms 126, 128
Evening: Psalms 130, 131

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The Daughters of Wisdom Discipline:
Mothers, Sisters, Daughters, pray for the Patriarchy. Pray for the blessings God has promised. Pray for God's will to be done.

Morning: Psalm 133, 1 Samuel 2: 1 – 10

Meditate on how joyous it is when brothers dwell together in unity!
For additional morning encouragement, add the Song of Hannah, the mother of Samuel, as she gives thanks to God.

Midday: Proverbs 31

The Wisdom of the mother of King Lemuel. Meditate on the promises God gives to the wife that trust his words. Meditate on the blessings you are given. Consider the life presented therein, and rejoice in it.

Vespers: Psalm 135 (optional)

Remember the mighty works of the LORD Jesus, and remember the folly of those who trust in idols of silver and gold (and plastic).

Compline: Psalm 134, Magnificat

Bless the LORD Jesus at the end of the day, and add in the Song of Mary, the mother of our LORD, as she gives thanks to God.

Learn more about this disciple at <https://sonsofsolomon.net/dow>

Advent devotional for Christians considered "Mad" by the world.

