

**Unwrapping the GIFT of Christmas**

**This is the time of the year when things get very busy! It is summer and the days are warming up. Businesses decorate their shops and put on endless cycles of carols; houses put up their Christmas lights; schools wrap up for the year; there are parties to go to, and end of year work functions to attend; families plan their holidays: Christmas is around the corner! It is not unusual to be shopping and the shop assistant asks, “Are you ready for Christmas?” We understand that they would mean: “Have you bought your gifts; is your food all planned; are the festivities arranged?” All around us people are scurrying, stressed and so busy! We, too, can get caught up in the frenzy! So, we will stop for a while and allow ourselves time to reflect on the Lord’s ultimate gift to us in His Son! Let us delight in the company of each other and together unwrap the gifts that Christ has given us, through His Spirit. The way we respond to God's gifts to us, in turn, becomes our gift to him.**

**SING: PSALM 133:1,2**

1.

How good it is when brothers are united,

With one another’s company delighted,

And live in pleasant harmony.

It’s like the precious oil on Aaron’s head

When down his beard and priestly robe it spread,

That he might God’s anointed be.

2.

 It’s like the dew of Hermon, so refreshing,

which to the hills of Zion is a blessing

when it in cooling drops descends.

For there, in Zion, in his dwelling place,

the Lord bestows amazing gifts of grace

and grants the life that never ends.

**Prayer**

**Bible Reading:**

# Matthew 2:1-12

**2**Now after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea in the days of Herod the king, behold, [[a](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Matthew+2%3A1-12&version=NKJV#fen-NKJV-23171a)]wise men from the East came to Jerusalem, **2**saying, “Where is He who has been born King of the Jews? For we have seen His star in the East and have come to worship Him.”

**3**When Herod the king heard *this,* he was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him. **4**And when he had gathered all the chief priests and scribes of the people together, he inquired of them where the Christ was to be born.

**5**So they said to him, “In Bethlehem of Judea, for thus it is written by the prophet:

**6**‘But you, Bethlehem, *in* the land of Judah,
Are not the least among the rulers of Judah;
For out of you shall come a Ruler
Who will shepherd My people Israel.’ ”

**7**Then Herod, when he had secretly called the [[b](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Matthew+2%3A1-12&version=NKJV#fen-NKJV-23177b)]wise men, determined from them what time the star appeared. **8**And he sent them to Bethlehem and said, “Go and search carefully for the young Child, and when you have found *Him,* bring back word to me, that I may come and worship Him also.”

**9**When they heard the king, they departed; and behold, the star which they had seen in the East went before them, till it came and stood over where the young Child was. **10**When they saw the star, they rejoiced with exceedingly great joy. **11**And when they had come into the house, they saw the young Child with Mary His mother, and fell down and worshiped Him. And when they had opened their treasures, they presented gifts to Him: gold, frankincense, and myrrh.

**12**Then, being divinely warned in a dream that they should not return to Herod, they departed for their own country another way.

**A few weeks ago, we heard a sermon from Rev Alkema in which he explored the gifts of Christ given to us through the Holy Spirit. His text was Lords Day 19. He said:**

*“The catechism mentions this in Answer 51: How does the glory of Christ, our Head, benefit us? We find there: First, by His Holy Spirit He pours out heavenly gifts upon us, His members. And the Biblical reference there links to Ephesians, chapter 4:7-16. If you look at Ephesians 4:7, you find these words: But to each one of us grace was given according to the measure of Christ’s gifts. Now where does this reference to Christ’s gifts come from, according to Paul? That is found in verse 8: Therefore, He says: When He ascended on high, He led captivity captive, and gave gifts to men. That is a quote from Psalm 68, which is a glorious and moving Psalm illustrating some of the joy and wonder that God’s people can have in the power and majesty of the Lord: God shall arise and by His might put all His enemies to flight; His triumph will be glorious. Your heart soars when you sing that! The whole Psalm is a testimony to the glory and splendour of God.”*

**SING: PSALM 68:1**

God shall arise and by His might

put all His enemies to flight;

His triumph will be glorious.

When those who hate Him, scattered flee

Before His glorious majesty,

our God will be victorious.

For just as wind blows smoke away,

So God will scatter the array

Of those who evil cherish.

Like wax that melts before the fire,

They will be vanquished by God’s ire;

the wicked all will perish.

*“When the glory of the Lord is revealed in Jerusalem, then the Psalm speaks of that being such a profound thing that the kings of the earth will appear there, bringing gifts. In the ancient world, that is what you did when you entered into the presence of a king; you brought gifts. The Queen of Sheba did that with Solomon, and there are other examples. That is why it is so fitting – also as we begin to move closer to the celebration of Christmas – that the wise men brought gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh: they were gifts intended for the king! Even today, if you are going to see a dignitary like a king or queen or a president or prime minister, it seems appropriate to give a gift. It is a recognition of the person’s position and status. Psalm 68 reflects the supreme glory of God, for it is the kings of the earth that will come and instead of receiving gifts, they will bring them. It says: You have ascended on high. You have led captivity captive; you have received gifts among men”.*

**SING: PSALM 68:7**

God’s chariots, mighty to behold,

are twice ten thousand thousand fold;

the mountains quaked and trembled.

From Sinai, God victoriously

came down into his sanctuary;

in Zion all assembled.

When you, O Lord, went up again

you led your captives in your train

with tribute in abundance;

gifts, too, from those who rebels were –

that you, Lord God, for evermore,

might dwell there in resplendence.

*“Paul takes Psalm 68, and with the benefit of the history of revelation says: this is a psalm that ultimately points ahead to the Great King, the Lord Jesus Christ. He is the only who truly ascends on high; not to Jerusalem, but to heavenly joy and glory. He is the ultimate king, for He does not receive gifts like earthly kings, but He gives them! That’s why Paul references Psalm 68, but adjusts it to the glory and splendour of Jesus Christ. He is the ruler of the kings of the earth, unlike any other king. He is the One who from heaven gives heavenly gifts to His people: the supreme and wondrous King of all creation. We can give gifts to one other in this life, and that is all well and good. But the gifts from heaven are the best gifts of all: forgiveness of sins, the gift of faith, the assurance of salvation and the promise of eternal life, the working of the Spirit in our hearts and lives, a place and function in God’s kingdom and a task to be busy with. There are so many gifts, and it is for good reason that the catechism uses the verb ‘pours’ in connection with these gifts. They just keep pouring out!”*

**SING: HYMN 85:1**

Now thank we all our God

with hearts, and hands, and voices,

who wondrous things has done,

in Whom His world rejoices;

who from our mothers’ arms

has blessed us on our way

with countless gifts of love,

and still is ours today.

**Discussion**: discuss the significance of the gifts which God gives us in each of the following passages...

1. **Ephesians 4: 7-16**
2. **1 Corinthians 1:3-9**
3. **Mark 1: 1-8**
4. **Isaiah 61:1-4 and Luke 4:16-22**
5. **Luke 1:47-55**

*“Do you appreciate how wondrous and special these heavenly gifts are? Paul says: these gifts are yours in Christ! Christ gives us different roles: some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, some pastoral and teachers, but with the expressed purpose that as His body we grow together. There is great comfort receiving heavenly gifts, but there is also a calling with these gifts. As God’s people, we are called to grow together as part of that body: from whom the whole body, joined and knit together by what every joint supplies, according to the effective working by which every part does its share, causes growth of the body for the edifying of itself in love. And how is it that we can grow together, in love, in purpose, and in unity? By lifting our hearts on high, and focusing on where our Saviour is. Heavenly gifts are gifts to prepare us for heaven. In heaven there is no division, no selfishness, no dismissal of others, but a perfect unity of love and purpose. Those who are comforted by Christ’s heavenly gifts are called to work with Christ’s heavenly gifts.”*

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**SING: Hymn 40:4,5**

4.

We lift our hearts to Christ on high,

for he who laid his glory by

is King of all creation.

Appearing as his church’s Head,

he rules the living and the dead

and judges every nation.

5.

From heaven he sent his Spirit down

who gives rich gifts to us his own,

gifts from his treasure taken.

Protecting us from Satan’s lure,

Christ keeps us by his power secure;

we’ll never be forsaken.

**INTERVAL**

**SING: The Fruit of the Spirit**

**CHORUS**:

For the fruit of the Spirit is Love, Joy, Peace,

Patience, Kindness, Goodness,

Faithfulness, Gentleness, Self-control;

For such there is no law!

1.

Have you seen my Lord on the cross so high?

Do you know His name? Do you hear His cry?

“Father, here’s my love. Father, take my love,

As the tree bears fruit for you! **CHORUS**

2.

Have you seen His face and the look He gave?

To the dying man he alone would save?

Sinner, here’s my love. Sinner, take my love,

As the tree bears fruit for you! **CHORUS**

3.

Can you answer Him? Can the heart reply?

How to follow Him as we live and die!

Jesus, here’s our love. Jesus, take our love,

As the tree bears fruit for you! **CHORUS**

**LOVE**

# John 3:16

**16**For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.

# 1 John 4:7-11

**7**Beloved, let us love one another, for love is of God; and everyone who loves is born of God and knows God. **8**He who does not love does not know God, for God is love. **9**In this the love of God was manifested toward us, that God has sent His only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through Him. **10**In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son *to be* the propitiation for our sins. **11**Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another.

# 1 Corinthians 13:4-7

**4**Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. **5**It does not dishonor others, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. **6**Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. **7**It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres.

**SING: HYMN 72:1,2,3**

1.

Behold, the amazing gift of love

The father has bestowed

On us, the sinful sons of men,

To call us sons of God.

2.

Concealed as yet this honour lies;

’tis to the world unknown,

for this world knew not him who came

as God’s eternal Son.

3.

We are God’s children here and now,

for he made us his own,

but what we shall hereafter be,

that he has not yet shown.

4.

We know that when our Lord appears,

then we like him shall be,

for then his face, him as he is,

we shall in glory see.

5.

Now everyone who has this hope,

which rests in him secure,

from evil purifies himself

as he, our Lord, is pure.

**JOY**

# Luke 2:8-11

**8**Now there were in the same country shepherds living out in the fields, keeping watch over their flock by night. **9**And [[c](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Luke+2%3A1-11&version=NKJV#fen-NKJV-24983c)]behold, an angel of the Lord stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were greatly afraid. **10**Then the angel said to them, “Do not be afraid, for behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy which will be to all people. **11**For there is born to you this day in the city of David a Saviour, who is Christ the Lord.

# John 15:9-11

**9**“As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Now remain in my love. **10**If you keep my commands, you will remain in my love, just as I have kept my Father’s commands and remain in his love. **11**I have told you this so that my joy may be in you and that your joy may be complete.

# Philippians 4:4

**4**Rejoice in the Lord always. Again, I will say, rejoice!

**SING HYMN 21:1-6**

1.

While shepherds watched their flocks by night

All seated on the ground,

An angel of the Lord came down

And glory shone around.

2.

He said to them, “Be not afraid,

for I have come to tell

good news of great and wondrous joy

for all of Israel.

3.

“To you in David’s town today

was born of David’s line

a Saviour, who is Christ the Lord;

and this will be the sign:

4.

“A newborn Child you there will find,

not as a king arrayed

but humbly wrapped in swaddling cloths

and in a manger laid.”

5.

Then, with the angel all at once,

Appeared a mighty throng –

A glorious heavenly multitude,

All praising God in song:

6.

“All glory to our God on high

and on the earth his peace

for men to whom he favour shows

which nevermore shall cease.”

**PEACE**

# Luke 1:76-79

**76**And you, my child, will be called a prophet of the Most High;
    for you will go on before the Lord to prepare the way for him,
**77**to give his people the knowledge of salvation
    through the forgiveness of their sins,
**78**because of the tender mercy of our God,
    by which the rising sun will come to us from heaven
**79**to shine on those living in darkness
    and in the shadow of death,
to guide our feet into the path of peace.”

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| --- |
| Luke 2:13 **13**And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God and saying: **14**“Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, goodwill[[a](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Luke+2%3A13%2C14&version=NKJV#fen-NKJV-24988a)] toward men!” |

**2 Thessalonians 3:16**

**16**Now may the Lord of peace himself give you peace at all times and in every way. The Lord be with all of you.

# Philippians 4:6

**6**Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God.

**7**And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

**SING HYMN 20: 2,3**

2.

The Word became incarnate –

made flesh, yet very God.

The angels hailed his coming

with songs o’er fields abroad.

Repeat the song again:

“To God on high the glory,

and peace on earth to men!”

3.

Sing praise to God the Father;

join with the heavenly bands.

Rejoice, O vales and mountains,

and, oceans, clap your hands!

Repeat the song again:

“To God on high the glory,

and peace on earth to men!”

**PATIENCE**

# Luke 2:25-32

**25**Now there was a man in Jerusalem called Simeon, who was righteous and devout. He was waiting for the consolation of Israel, and the Holy Spirit was on him. **26**It had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not die before he had seen the Lord’s Messiah. **27**Moved by the Spirit, he went into the temple courts. When the parents brought in the child Jesus to do for him what the custom of the Law required, **28**Simeon took him in his arms and praised God, saying:

**29**“Sovereign Lord, as you have promised,
    you may now dismiss[[a](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Luke+2%3A25-32&version=NIV#fen-NIV-25003a)] your servant in peace.
**30**For my eyes have seen your salvation,
**31**  which you have prepared in the sight of all nations:
**32**a light for revelation to the Gentiles,
    and the glory of your people Israel.”

# James 1:3-4, 5:7-11

**3**because you know that the testing of your faith produces patience. **4**Let patience finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything...

**7**Therefore be patient, brethren, until the coming of the Lord. See *how* the farmer waits for the precious fruit of the earth, waiting patiently for it until it receives the early and latter rain. **8**You also be patient. Establish your hearts, for the coming of the Lord [[f](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=James+5&version=NKJV#fen-NKJV-30363f)]is at hand.

**9**Do not [[g](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=James+5&version=NKJV#fen-NKJV-30364g)]grumble against one another, brethren, lest you be [[h](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=James+5&version=NKJV#fen-NKJV-30364h)]condemned. Behold, the Judge is standing at the door! **10**My brethren, take the prophets, who spoke in the name of the Lord, as an example of suffering and patience. **11**Indeed we count them blessed who endure. You have heard of the perseverance of Job and seen the end *intended by* the Lord—that the Lord is very compassionate and merciful.

**SING: HYMN 22:1,2**

1.

Now, let your servant, Lord,

According to Your Word

Depart in exultation;

Now I in peace may rest:

My eyes have seen at last

Your wonderful salvation.

2. Lord, you have graciously

prepared for all to see

a light for revelation

to Gentiles far and near,

and glory bright and clear

to Israel, your nation.

**KINDNESS**

# Isaiah 54:10

**10**For the mountains shall depart
And the hills be removed,
But My kindness shall not depart from you,
Nor shall My covenant of peace be removed,”
Says the Lord, who has mercy on you.

# Ephesians 2:7

**7**that in the ages to come He might show the exceeding riches of His grace in *His* kindness toward us in Christ Jesus.

# Titus 3:3-7

**3**At one time we too were foolish, disobedient, deceived and enslaved by all kinds of passions and pleasures. We lived in malice and envy, being hated and hating one another. **4**But when the kindness and love of God our Savior appeared, **5**he saved us, not because of righteous things we had done, but because of his mercy.He saved us through the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit, **6**whom he poured out on us generously through Jesus Christ our Savior, **7**so that, having been justified by his grace, we might become heirs having the hope of eternal life.

# 2 Peter 1:5-9

**5**But also for this very reason, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue, to virtue knowledge, **6**to knowledge self-control, to self-control [[a](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=2+Peter+1%3A5-9&version=NKJV#fen-NKJV-30486a)]perseverance, to perseverance godliness, **7**to godliness brotherly kindness, and to brotherly kindness love. **8**For if these things are yours and abound, *you* will be neither [[b](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=2+Peter+1%3A5-9&version=NKJV#fen-NKJV-30488b)]barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. **9**For he who lacks these things is short sighted, even to blindness, and has forgotten that he was cleansed from his old sins.

**SING HYMN 16: 3,5**

3.

You will maintain my happy lot, O Lord;

the lines have fallen in most pleasant places.

The heritage that you to me award

is my delight, a gift that I hold precious.

Your measuring-rod has blessed me with your favour,

marked out a place to be enjoyed forever.

5. Therefore I will rejoice with heart and soul;

my body rests secure in your protection.

You will not leave me down in dark Sheol,

nor let your Holy One there see corruption.

Your presence gives me joy in fullest measures;

your right hand brings me everlasting pleasures.

**GOODNESS**

# Psalm 16

**16**Preserve[[a](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Psalm+16&version=NKJV#fen-NKJV-14094a)] me, O God, for in You I put my trust.

**2***O my soul,* you have said to the Lord,
“You *are* my Lord,
My goodness is nothing apart from You.” ...

**5**O Lord, *You are* the portion of my inheritance and my cup;
You [[b](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Psalm+16&version=NKJV#fen-NKJV-14098b)]maintain my lot.
**6**The lines have fallen to me in pleasant *places;*
Yes, I have a good inheritance.

**7**I will bless the Lord who has given me counsel;
My [[c](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Psalm+16&version=NKJV#fen-NKJV-14100c)]heart also instructs me in the night seasons.
**8**I have set the Lord always before me;
Because *He is* at my right hand I shall not be moved.

**9**Therefore my heart is glad, and my glory rejoices;
My flesh also will [[d](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Psalm+16&version=NKJV#fen-NKJV-14102d)]rest in hope.
**10**For You will not leave my soul in [[e](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Psalm+16&version=NKJV#fen-NKJV-14103e)]Sheol,
Nor will You allow Your Holy One to [[f](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Psalm+16&version=NKJV#fen-NKJV-14103f)]see corruption.
**11**You will show me the path of life;
In Your presence *is* fullness of joy;
At Your right hand *are* pleasures forevermore.

**SING: PSALM 23**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| 1 | The Lord’s my Shepherd, I’ll not want;  He makes me down to lieIn pastures green; He leadeth me  The quiet waters by. |
| 2 | My soul He doth restore again,  And me to walk doth makeWithin the paths of righteousness,  E’en for His own name’s sake. |
| 3 | Yea, though I walk in death’s dark vale,  Yet will I fear no ill;For Thou art with me, and Thy rod  And staff me comfort still. |
| 4 | My table Thou hast furnished  In presence of my foes;My head Thou dost with oil anoint,  And my cup overflows. |
| 5 | Goodness and mercy all my life  Shall surely follow me,And in God’s house forevermore  My dwelling-place shall be. |

**GENTLENESS**

# Isaiah 42:1-5

“Behold! My Servant whom I uphold,
My [[a](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Isaiah+42%3A1-5&version=NKJV#fen-NKJV-18482a)]Elect One *in whom* My soul delights!
I have put My Spirit upon Him;
He will bring forth justice to the Gentiles.
**2**He will not cry out, nor raise *His voice,*
Nor cause His voice to be heard in the street.
**3**A bruised reed He will not break,
And [[b](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Isaiah+42%3A1-5&version=NKJV#fen-NKJV-18484b)]smoking flax He will not [[c](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Isaiah+42%3A1-5&version=NKJV#fen-NKJV-18484c)]quench;
He will bring forth justice for truth.
**4**He will not fail nor be discouraged,
Till He has established justice in the earth;
And the coastlands shall wait for His law.”

# Matthew 11:28-30

**28**Come to Me, all *you* who labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.**29**Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am [[a](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Matthew+11%3A28-30&version=NKJV#fen-NKJV-23489a)]gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. **30**For My yoke *is* easy and My burden is light.”

# Ephesians 4:1-3

**4**I, therefore, the prisoner [[a](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Ephesians+4%3A1-3&version=NKJV#fen-NKJV-29274a)]of the Lord, [[b](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Ephesians+4%3A1-3&version=NKJV#fen-NKJV-29274b)]beseech you to walk worthy of the calling with which you were called, **2**with all lowliness and gentleness, with longsuffering, bearing with one another in love, **3**endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.

# Philippians 4:5  5Let your [[a](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Philippians+4%3A5&version=NKJV#fen-NKJV-29448a)]gentleness be known to all men. The Lord *is* at hand.

**SING: HYMN 17: 4,5,6**

4.

His arm revealed his might,

for he has put to flight

all those who are proud-hearted,

and he pulled haughty ones

down from their lofty thrones;

the lowly he supported.

5.

Abundant gifts the Lord

has on the hungry poured;

their suffering he has ended.

The rich he sent away;

he, much to their dismay,

let them go empty-handed.

6.

The Lord is merciful;

his servant Israel

he graciously delivered,

remembering evermore

what he to Abraham swore

and to his seed forever.

**FAITHFULNESS**

# Luke 1:67-79

**67**Now his father Zacharias was filled with the Holy Spirit, and prophesied, saying:

**68**“Blessed *is* the Lord God of Israel,
For He has visited and redeemed His people,
**69**And has raised up a horn of salvation for us
In the house of His servant David,
**70**As He spoke by the mouth of His holy prophets,
Who *have been* since the world began,
**71**That we should be saved from our enemies
And from the hand of all who hate us,
**72**To perform the mercy *promised* to our fathers
And to remember His holy covenant,
**73**The oath which He swore to our father Abraham:
**74**To grant us that we,
Being delivered from the hand of our enemies,
Might serve Him without fear,
**75**In holiness and righteousness before Him all the days of our life.

# Isaiah 49:7

**7**Thus says the Lord,
The Redeemer of Israel, [[a](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Isaiah+49%3A7&version=NKJV#fen-NKJV-18644a)]their Holy One,
To Him [[b](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Isaiah+49%3A7&version=NKJV#fen-NKJV-18644b)]whom man despises,
To Him whom the nation abhors,
To the Servant of rulers:
“Kings shall see and arise,
Princes also shall worship,
Because of the Lord who is faithful,
The Holy One of Israel;
And He has chosen You.”

# Lamentations 3:22-23

**22***Through* the Lord’s mercies we are not consumed,
Because His compassions fail not.
**23***They are* new every morning;
Great *is* Your faithfulness.

# Hebrews 12:1-2

**12**Therefore we also, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which so easily ensnares *us,* and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, **2**looking unto Jesus, the [[a](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Hebrews+12%3A1-2&version=NKJV#fen-NKJV-30215a)]author and [[b](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Hebrews+12%3A1-2&version=NKJV#fen-NKJV-30215b)]finisher of *our* faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.

**SING: HYMN 66:1,3**

1.

Great is Thy faithfulness, O God my father;

There is no shadow of turning with Thee;

Thou changest not, thy compassions, they fail not,

As thou hast been thou forever wilt be.

**REFRAIN:**

Great is Thy faithfulness! Great is Thy faithfulness

Morning by morning new mercies I see

All I have needed Thy hand hath provided

Great is Thy faithfulness, Lord unto me!

3.

Pardon for sin and a peace that endureth,

thy own dear presence to cheer and to guide,

strength for today and bright hope for tomorrow –

blessings all mine, with ten thousand beside.

**REFRAIN**

**SELF-CONTROL**

# Colossians 3:1-7, 12-17

**3**Since, then, you have been raised with Christ, set your hearts on things above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. **2**Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things. **3**For you died, and your life is now hidden with Christ in God. **4**When Christ, who is your[[a](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Colossians+3%3A1-7&version=NIV#fen-NIV-29522a)] life, appears, then you also will appear with him in glory.

**5**Put to death, therefore, whatever belongs to your earthly nature: sexual immorality, impurity, lust, evil desires and greed, which is idolatry. **6**Because of these, the wrath of God is coming.[[b](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Colossians+3%3A1-7&version=NIV#fen-NIV-29524b)] **7**You used to walk in these ways, in the life you once lived....

**12**Therefore, as God’s chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience. **13**Bear with each other and forgive one another if any of you has a grievance against someone. Forgive as the Lord forgave you. **14**And over all these virtues put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity.

**15**Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, since as members of one body you were called to peace. And be thankful. **16**Let the message of Christ dwell among you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom through psalms, hymns, and songs from the Spirit, singing to God with gratitude in your hearts. **17**And whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through Him.

**SING: HYMN 50:1,2,3,4**

1.The Spirit came, as promised, in God’s appointed hour;

And now to each believer He comes in love and power.

And by His Holy Spirit, God seals us as His own,

And through the Son and Spirit makes access to the throne.

2. The Spirit makes our bodies the temple of the Lord.

He binds us all together in faith and true accord.

The Spirit in His greatness brings power from God above,

and with the Son and Father dwells in our hearts in love.

3. He bids us live together in unity and peace;

employ His gifts in blessing, and let base passions cease.

We should not grieve the Spirit by open sin or shame,

nor let our words and actions deny his holy name.

4. The Word, the Spirit’s weapon, will bring all sin to light;

and prayer, by His directing, will give new joy and might.

Be filled then with his Spirit, live out God’s will and Word;

rejoice with hymns and singing, make music to the Lord.

**Prayer**

**SING: HYMN 47:1,2**

1.

He has come, the Holy Spirit!

Jesus left us not alone

When He went up to inherit

Might and glory on the throne,

For He sent the one He promised:

Holy Spirit, Power of God.

Let us spread this truth abroad

And unceasingly declare it.

Let us now our voices raise:

To the Spirit we give praise.

2.

Praise the Spirit who, proceeding

From the Father and the Son,

In the truth the church is leading

Let us praise Him everyone –

Him who is both Gift and Giver,

Him the sender sent to earth,

Holy God and yet poured forth!

Praise, O people Him forever:

He true life to you imparts,

For He dwells within your hearts.

**Compiled by Trudy Bergsma**

**West Albany Free Reformed Church**

**Christmas Meeting Ladies Bible Study Clubs, 2019**

**Reference**

**Rev Alkema**

Lord's Day 19 Sermon 4 West Albany

October 27th, 2019

(used with permission)

**Prayers:**

**Beginning of meeting:**

Our Gracious and Heavenly Father,

We come before You with great thankfulness in our hearts. You have enabled us to gather here with all these women of your church in West Albany. The year is quickly drawing to a close, and you have given us one more night of Bible Study after a whole year of coming together to discuss your word. We thank you, Lord, for all those meetings! They have been good, and we could freely talk about the gospel of grace which you have given to us. This gospel was evident in every chapter of your word, and we have been so privileged to uncover the beautiful riches that it contains. It has made us very aware of our sinfulness, and how very much we are all in need of a Saviour. And so, as we come closer to the celebration of Christmas, we are able to thank you for sending us your son! That you sent Him from the perfection of heaven to live amongst us as sinful, very much imperfect people, is a wonder we can never fully comprehend. We just praise You Lord for your mercy! And we pray that you’ll bless us as we spend time in once again contemplating the great and mighty wonder that you on earth have done!

We pray that you’ll keep sin and distractions far from us. We pray this for Jesus’ sake,

Amen.

**Concluding prayer**

**Oh Lord, as we have reached the end of our Christmas evening , we thank you for helping us to unwrap your most wondrous gift – layer by layer.** We thank You for the miraculous birth of Your Son Who gave us amazing gifts of grace! We thank you for the gift of faith with which we may see this. We know that we did not deserve this gift, for when we fell into sin, we fell completely. There was nothing left in us to get ourselves out of the mess of sin. We thank You for way in which You worked all the way from creation to the birth of your Son, to fulfil the promise you made to crush the head of the serpent, in order to renew the relationship we had with you before we fell into sin! What joy and comfort this brings us! That we can once again be your children! That you have worked this out throughout history! We thank you for the gift of forgiveness which we received when Christ died on the cross on our behalf. We thank You that He conquered the grave when He rose from it again. We thank You that He could also go back to heaven when You also gave us another wonderful gift – that of your Holy Spirit! Whilst heaven with joy received her Lord, you did not leave us to our own devises, but made it possible for us to receive Your presence into our hearts. And with the pouring out of the Spirit You gave us all Christ’s attributes revealed, as we saw tonight, in His Word ... those of love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, gentleness, faithfulness and self-control. All these gifts right in front of us as we wait expectantly for your Son to return for the great finale. We pray, Lord that these gifts will not return to you empty. So, we pray for Spirit filled lives which echo only thankfulness, joy, glory and praise as we look forward to your final gift – a life with you in Heaven, a life which will never end.

**Father, this is what we pray for this Christmas season!** Help each and every one of us to reflect on all this. Please will you be with all your children as they celebrate the birth of Jesus. For many this is also a period of sadness. It can be a time of remembering loved ones who are not with us anymore. Then this time of celebration can be a lonely time for them. Father, please will you be with those who still grieve daily. Be a Father to them all, and graciously grant them daily comfort and strength, and the assurance that Your mercies are new every morning!

We pray for a blessing on us all as we leave here. Give us a good break with family and friends, so that we’ll come back next year refreshed and ready to do our daily work again. Please forgive our sins also of tonight, and hear us Lord for the sake of Your Son, our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

Amen