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A Reflection for Today: *Love*

Christmas is cancelled! Yes, all about us is so different this year, but we invite you to join us in celebrating that which remains the same. Christmas is all about the **love** that God has for us in sending Jesus to us as a baby. When all around us is changing we can celebrate a real event in history which cannot be cancelled. When all around us is changing, we can celebrate a **constant and consistent God** who can never change *(Mary)*

Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, to-day and forever
(Hebrews 13 verse 8)

You can never truly enjoy Christmas until you can look up into the Father's face and tell him you have received his Christmas **love gift** – his Son

A Prayer for Today

We give thanks to you, Heavenly Father, for the yearly unfolding of the seasons and the beauty around us. Thank you for the freshness of spring, the beauty of summer gardens, the colours of autumn trees and the renewal throughout the winter. For all these things and much more, we give you praise. *(Brenda)*



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A Reflection for Today: *Immanuel*

At Christmas, I love to reflect on one of Jesus' many names: **Immanuel**, which means '**God with us**'. The hope, joy and wonder of the Christmas story rests on the fact that Jesus came to be with us, on Earth. Jesus, the creator and rightful ruler of the universe, was born as a weak, human baby. He came so that he could experience our sufferings and walk with us in them, eventually walking right up to the cross to put an end to them once and for all. In a year like 2020, what greater comfort can there be than to remember that we have a God who is with us in our struggles, and who loves us so much that he stepped into our world, that one day, we might never struggle again?
(Esther)

Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign: the virgin will be with child and will give birth to a son, and will call him Immanuel
(Isaiah 7 verse 14)

A Prayer for Today

Lord, please bless and keep safe all those I know and love. Lord, keep all the NHS workers safe, strong and resilient in these difficult times

(Jean W)



BBC Advent Calendar Day 5



A Reflection for Today: *Peace*

An Advent thought for today: Water falls and is blown into an opaque sheathe across the window in my living room. This happens when the wind comes from the east. Then the intersection of clear glass and clear water combine to make a curdled veil. **Why?** What does water not like about being disturbed? If you hold it perfectly still, it is perfectly clear. But if you throw it, or stir it, or pour it, it becomes a disturbed and opaque. **Am I like water?** Do I need the stillness to see? Do I become a destructive force when there is too much of me, when I am frozen, when I am tossed about? They say, after all, that humans are over 65% water. Maybe I should study my properties more closely this Advent, in order that others and I can see more clearly the coming saviour in my life. *(Paul C)*

Do our lives reflect the peace of God to others?

A Prayer for Today

We remember before you, Lord, the many who are struggling at this time in so many ways. There is physical and mental illness, bereavement, long waits for appointments, job loss, little money, abuse, fear and so much more. We pray for improvement in the world situation as the vaccines come on board and for comfort and help for all those in distress

(Brenda)



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A Reflection for Today: *Shepherds*

Shepherds are mentioned many times in the Bible. We read of Abraham, Moses and David all being shepherds, and Jesus is often referred to as '**The Good Shepherd**'. At the time of Jesus, during the warmer part of year, shepherds would be outdoors all the time. Each morning they would call, and the flock of sheep and goats would follow them to pasture ground where the animals could graze. The shepherds would find a pool of water or a well for them to have a drink. In the evening they would count the animals and check their health. At night the shepherds would guard the sheep and goats in open folds, or shelter the flock in a cave where they could protect them from jackals and hyenas. A howl of a hyena could panic a flock and the calm reassuring voice of a shepherd would still them. Shepherds would have worn sheepskin over their tunics. Sandals protected their feet from sharp rocks and thorns, and they wrapped their heads in a woven woollen cloth. Among the things they carried was a sling, which was used to lob stones near the straying sheep or goats to frighten them back to the flock, or to drive off prowling wild animals. *(Brenda)*

How does what the shepherds did remind us of Jesus, the Good Shepherd?

A Prayer for Today

Thank you for the privilege of working as a midwife on Christmas Eve at a maternity unit, when carol singers sang 'Away in a Manger' and the labour ward door was opened just as a baby had been born and was crying!

(Jean W)



BBC Advent Calendar Day 3



A Reflection for Today: *Star*

Christmas is ... **light**. More than the light from a new star. It's the light of God's eternal love shining through the midnight of man's despair.

(provided by Kate, from 'The Wonder of Christmas' by Derric Johnston)

Come, O prince of peace,
Calm our fears, heal our wounds, fulfil our longings.
And in the child of Bethlehem
Break down the walls that divide and hurt us.
May your **star of hope** shine bright and clear
for all who look for light this Christmas.

Wise men followed a **star** to Bethlehem to worship the Son of God. Let's have the same aim this Christmas.

A Prayer for Today

Come Lord Jesus, and let your light shine through us - so that, through our actions, we may be salt for the earth and a light in people's sight. May we reach out with your message of hope, especially those in need



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A Reflection for Today: *Gifts*

A true Christmas story. I was sitting on a bench seat in Tesco, right next to the food-bank collection point. At the far end of the store I saw an old lady, stooped with age, her hair bedraggled and unkempt, her clothes shabby. Her shoes were thin and looked more like bedroom slippers. She carried an old fashioned bag in one hand. She shuffled towards me and stopped a passing shop assistant and enquired, "Is that the food-bank?" "Yes," was the reply. She shuffled there and I wondered what foodstuffs she would take. But she slowly lifted her bag and emptied everything she had in. Without a moment's hesitation she shuffled out of the shop and was gone from sight. That old lady had come in to buy food, not for herself but for someone that was worse off than her. Yes, I will have a lovely time with my family this Christmas with lots of food to eat, but there is one person that I know who will have a richer Christmas and a place at a heavenly banquet. Jesus said about the widow's mite that she had given more than all the others as they had given out of their surplus, but she had given everything she had. **Have a happy and blessed Christmas.** *(Bill)*

A Prayer for Today

Dear Lord, thank you for the gift of your son, the most precious gift, a reminder of your love for every one of us. May this warm our hearts, even in the darkest days of the year.

(Debbie)



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A Reflection for Today: *Prophecy*

One of the amazing things about the birth of Jesus is the way it fulfilled Old Testament prophecies about the **Messiah** – the one who is to come. If you have ever sung Handel's *Messiah*, some of these words will be very familiar to you, and they are often read at Carol Services. A well-known passage is found in **Micah 5:8** where it tells us that the Messiah would be born in **Bethlehem** and that he came from God and existed even before he was physically born. Later, in the New Testament, the early part of John agrees with this. **Isaiah 7:14** tells of birth to a **virgin** which emphasises Jesus' sinlessness and divine origin. It also explains that he is God with us and among us and that he will show us what God the Father is like. **Isaiah 9:6-7** tells us that the child is **born for us** and will give spiritual peace now, but physical peace and his reign will be in the future, and he is described as **Wonderful, Counsellor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father and Prince of Peace.** *(Brenda)*

A Prayer for Today

Lord, help us to be mindful of all those who are suffering for whatever reason and allow them to feel your love and peace over them.

(Jean W)

