

ADVENT THOUGHTS

Love
Letters

INTRO

Just twenty-four days to prepare for the Creator of the Universe to enter our being. For many of us, this has been a reoccurring event for many years – how might this one be different? Years have been spent heavily focused on the trimmings, the glitter and tinsel, for good reason – we’ve had family and children to bring up and society expects much of us. There has been little time set aside for spirituality, perhaps we were fortunate to be cocooned in a Church environment – to find later that there were unanswered questions that never got asked? That’s alright, of course, because these things are all mystery and cannot be explained easily; if at all.

NB: I am writing this for my benefit, though sharing it with a few of my fellow pilgrims. Advent 2024. Remember to read between the lines, perhaps read it more than once. What is the Word say to you this year?

FIRST WEEK

How can this year be different after seventy years of practice?

I know that there have been special moments, both at Church, and out there amidst the nature of all things – that I have felt (what I interpret as) the presence of God. It is my experience and my understanding of this, not something learned from books or sermons. There was a need for trust, in believing that God was much more than something to be served, worshiped and glorified. There was, an internal voice that was different to mine, that showed love for me – even in my darkest hour. The word was not loud or strong, but gentle and reassuring. Understanding in my confusion, and though it was impossible for me to reach any clarity, somehow it was sufficient, for that moment.

We might imagine a father figure or big brother in our need to relate this experience, which in reality, is another dimension. Throughout these momentary experiences, my human frame tried hard to fit the spiritual into a worldly context – and to some extent, that worked, for a while. However, I kept coming back to the Master Builder’s Holy Book where it said that He would bring life, and life to the full. The Word declares a kingdom that is not of this world, yet somehow, we are invited – here and now. More mystery, and something I am feeling more content in that it is **not** a mystery to be solved – but to be embraced.

So, just **relax** this week. Carry on with the rush of worldly preparations, that’s important too. But choose to see it differently, look for the cracks in our universe – where the light pours in. A freshness of life that speaks to our soul, our emotions and will. Trust in a creator God that knows us intimately and desires our relationship. I know, it’s a lot to take in. It usually takes a lifetime of being a pilgrim. So, make notes, draw a map and be content in the distance travelled so far. Life has a habit of revealing more as and when we need it.

THE COMING

There's something coming,
I can feel it in the air,
There's something coming,
And many do not care.
There's something coming,
Will we be prepared,
There's something coming,
Should we even be scared.
I heard talk of a King,
Who would rule over all,
What could I bring him,
Something quite small.
Change is coming,
Something that's needed,
What are we becoming,
If not the light He preceded.

Words John Pearson
Image: Nikola Jelenković



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SECOND WEEK

Are we human or spirit?

Born into this world, our first experience and overwhelming conviction is that we are human. Whether we were first spirit, before our human birth and return to spirit is another mystery – that there is no need to try and solve. I am sure there are more important things to figure out.

Our human side likes to have things in tidy boxes, set formats for the way things work. Advent has a format, a story to be told of how things came about. A prophetic message spilling into our world, written and shared over centuries – and somehow as relevant today as it was then. The story of the King of kings, who would enter our world in the poorest of circumstances, disguised as one of us. Not a warrior King, but one who comes to bring healing and peace. Not someone that will ever fit into any of our tidy boxes – that would be foolish to presume.

A story told, becomes a well-known practice. Then often, something we find difficult to see any other way. But of course, this is mystery – so there is always more to discover – as we see, hear and feel with our spiritual senses. Oh yes, we are spirit too, and there lies the conflict. A continuous battle between mind and spirit, of which the spirit seems content to wait for our mind and body to acknowledge the greater part. So, our dominant part is human, though our biggest part is spirit. The path we choose, is not of conflict (spirit v human/ good v evil). God is love, and love is the path. Love conquers all. Do not try so hard to be holy – simply love the Lord your God (King of Kings) with all your heart, with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it. Love your neighbour as yourself, all the law and the prophets hang on these two commandments – (you see, the rest will follow).

Oh yes, it's important to love yourself, we often prefer to side-step that one. Something we might practice daily – to journey inward is to discover our inner castle, and as we do so, we find God already there.

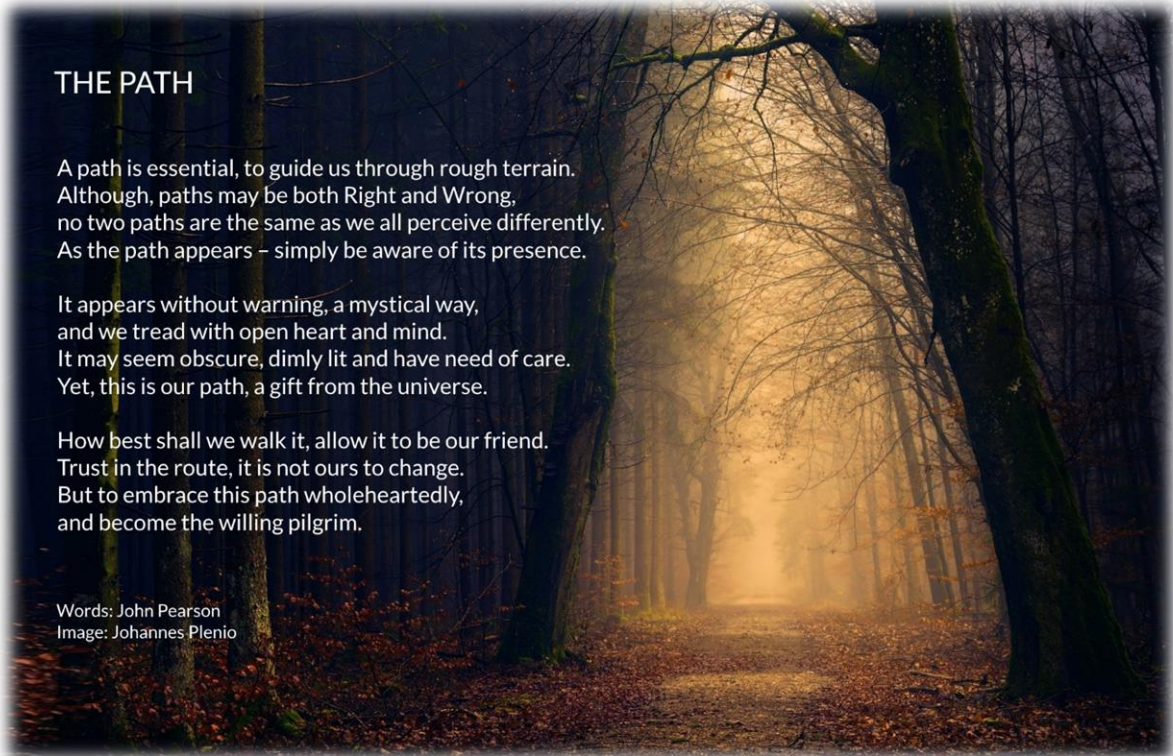
THE PATH

A path is essential, to guide us through rough terrain.
Although, paths may be both Right and Wrong,
no two paths are the same as we all perceive differently.
As the path appears – simply be aware of its presence.

It appears without warning, a mystical way,
and we tread with open heart and mind.
It may seem obscure, dimly lit and have need of care.
Yet, this is our path, a gift from the universe.

How best shall we walk it, allow it to be our friend.
Trust in the route, it is not ours to change.
But to embrace this path wholeheartedly,
and become the willing pilgrim.

Words: John Pearson
Image: Johannes Plenio



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THIRD WEEK

Can we really listen?

Then the LORD came and stood and called out as he had the other times, "Samuel, Samuel." Samuel said, "Speak, LORD, for your servant is listening." Samuel 3: 10.

God will call us, but how should we hear him? Listening is not difficult, we do it all the time – but that's the problem. We do it so often that it loses effect, we miss so much of the content. I mean, look at our daily conversations and misinterpretations. It can be amusing – it can also be disastrous. Samuel assumed it was Elli calling him. Elli realised God had something to say to Samuel, he sent him back to bed and told him to wait and how to respond.

There is the physical hearing, then there is the spiritual hearing. To learn how to use both, benefits us greatly. Both will work much better when we practice quietness. *Be still before the LORD, all mankind, because he has roused himself from his holy dwelling.* Zacheriah 2: 13

What will God ask of me, how fearful should I be? My thoughts are that God only asks of us, what he has already provided in us. *And God is able to bless you abundantly, so that in all things at all times, having all that you need, you will abound in every good work.* 2 Corinthians 9: 8

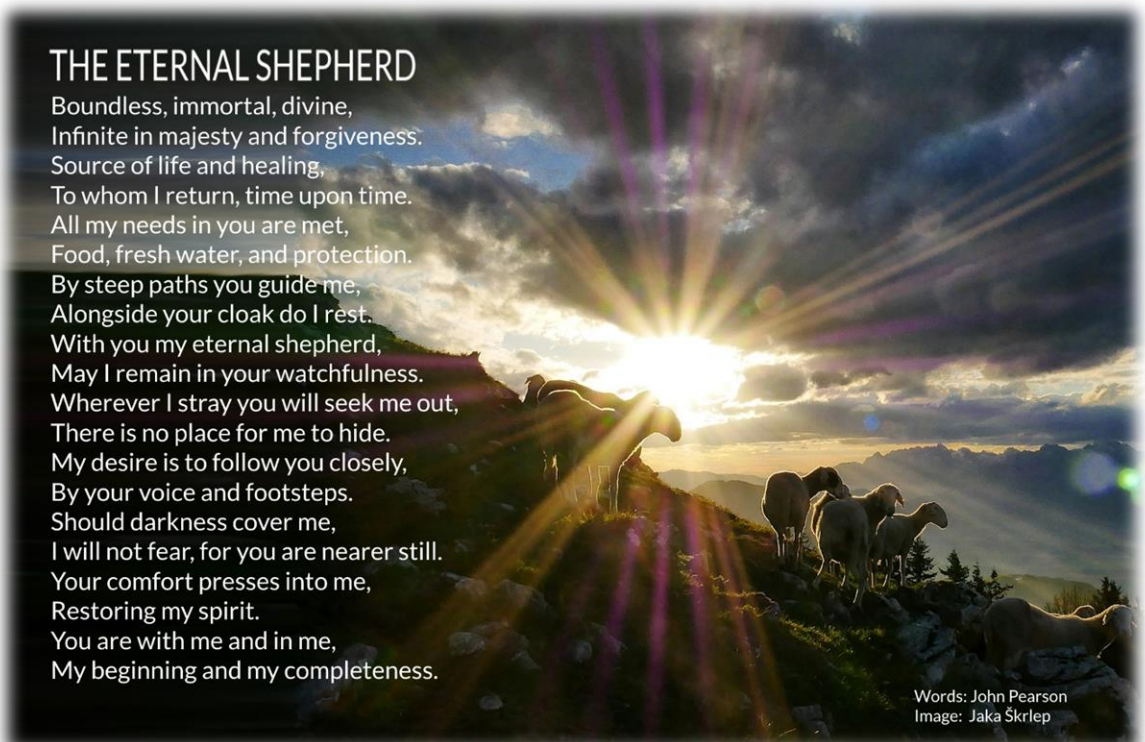
The carol – In the bleak mid-winter, never ceases to will bring a lump to my throat. The realisation that there is only one thing I can bring him. Bring him my heart. A heart that is open and listening – willing to act out of love. What more could we hope for this Advent?

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WWpOU3aCX_I



THE ETERNAL SHEPHERD

Boundless, immortal, divine,
Infinite in majesty and forgiveness.
Source of life and healing,
To whom I return, time upon time.
All my needs in you are met,
Food, fresh water, and protection.
By steep paths you guide me,
Alongside your cloak do I rest.
With you my eternal shepherd,
May I remain in your watchfulness.
Wherever I stray you will seek me out,
There is no place for me to hide.
My desire is to follow you closely,
By your voice and footsteps.
Should darkness cover me,
I will not fear, for you are nearer still.
Your comfort presses into me,
Restoring my spirit.
You are with me and in me,
My beginning and my completeness.



Words: John Pearson
Image: Jaka Škrlep

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FOURTH WEEK

To sit at your feet and feel your heartbeat.

Christmas, the birth of a child who would be the Messiah. Foretold through the Old Testament for more than a thousand years. Announced by angels, when the first to greet him were shepherds (the poorest of the poor). Followed by wise men bearing gifts.

The incarnation: God became man and lived among us. If we are to approach the manger, the place where the Christ child laid, as a factual story – we will miss the full meaning. For every single one of us is written into this mystical story. The story of redemption and wholeness, the fullness of life. This intense and unfathomable love that God has for us, individually and without judgement – that he would momentarily stop time and enter the world he created – for me, and for you.

This is more than a story to be played on a stage or screen. It is nothing short of everything... There is no secret code, no conditions – just be, let go, and let God, (the Christ child) fill you with his love to the level that it spills over and trickles into the lives of others. Take time to pause, stop time and listen to God's heartbeat and his breath – Yahweh. As Christ becomes incarnate within us, change, (in a good way) will follow. It's all part of the creator's plan, to be present in the world, and in us.

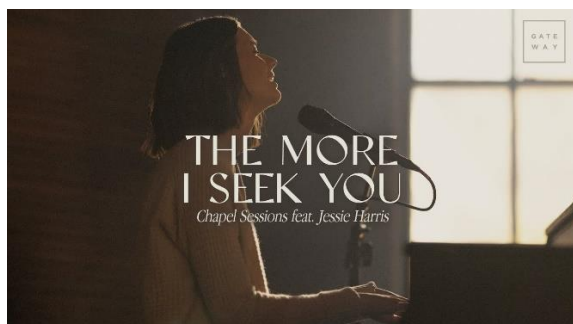
Be stirred by the following song with Jessie Harris

The more I seek you

The more I seek you
The more I find you
The more I find you, the more I love you

I want to sit at your feet
Drink from the cup in your hand
Lay back against you and breath, feel your heartbeat
This love is so deep, it's more than I can stand
I melt in your peace, it's overwhelming

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mEWDr_bfp60



Circle me Lord

Circle me Lord,
The first and the last.
An outer boundary,
Holding me fast.

Circle me Lord,
Above and below.
Keep me from falling
Never let go.

Circle me Lord,
By left and by right
Be my safe waymark
By day and night.

Circle me Lord,
May you not bypass.
Guide and direct me,
Be my true compass.

Circle me Lord,
Gather me within.
Open the circle,
Let true love begin.



Words: John Pearson
Image: Annie Spratt