

November 27

Isaiah 40:28-31

Do you not know?
Have you not heard?

The LORD is God from of old,
creator of the ends of the earth.

He does not faint or grow
weary, and his knowledge
is beyond scrutiny.

He gives power to the faint,
abundant strength to the weak.

Though young men faint and grow
weary, and youths stagger and fall,

They that hope in the LORD
will renew their strength,
they will soar on eagles' wings;

They will run and not grow weary,
walk and not grow faint.

Psalms 119: 11-16

With all my heart I seek you;
do not let me stray from your
commandments.

In my heart I treasure your promise,
that I may not sin against you.

Blessed are you, O LORD;
teach me your statutes.

With my lips I recite
all the judgments you have spoken.

I find joy in the way of your testimonies
more than in all riches.

I will ponder your precepts
and consider your paths.

In your statutes I take delight;
I will never forget your word.

Proverbs 3:1-8

My son, do not forget my teaching,
take to heart my commands;

For many days, and years of life,
and peace, will they bring you.

Do not let love and fidelity
forsake you; bind them around
your neck; write them on the
tablet of your heart.

Then will you win favor and esteem
before God and human beings.

Trust in the LORD with all your
heart, on your own intelligence do not
rely;

In all your ways be mindful of him,
and he will make straight your paths.

Do not be wise in your own eyes,
fear the LORD and turn away from
evil; This will mean health for your
flesh and vigor for your bones.

November 28

Isaiah 43: 1-3

But now, thus says the LORD,
who created you, Jacob, and formed you, Israel:
Do not fear, for I have redeemed you;
I have called you by name: you are mine.
When you pass through waters, I will be with you;
through rivers, you shall not be swept away.
When you walk through fire, you shall not be burned,
nor will flames consume you.
For I, the LORD, am your God,
the Holy One of Israel, your savior.



These verses are very dear to me. In them, I hear the tenderness of God. God chose me. A thousand years before Christ was born, He gave words to the prophet Isaiah: I know you. I have always known you. Go about the cares of your day, the fears and troubles of your night, with the full confidence that a savior lives. In the words of the Old Testament, we see the reality of the promise to be fulfilled in the New Testament; we see the proof that God knew. He always knew. He always knows. The bigness of that can be overwhelming. Let it be. Let yourself be overwhelmed by a huge God who knows you intimately. Life's a lot less scary that way, isn't it?



As we put pencil to paper and move it across the page, we make the thoughts captured by words our own. The simple act of handwriting becomes art when we infuse the strokes of our instrument with the music of our hearts. This morning, transcribe today's verses on the next page. Use colors if you like. Embellish the margins with your doodles. Annotate the lines with your morning thoughts. Make the words uniquely yours. With pencil and paper, move them from the page you hold into your very being.



Dear God, I've made resolutions before at the beginning of Advent or of Lent, only to have them fall by the wayside when the pace of the season quickens in the world. This time, I beg you to call me again and again to this place and this quiet, where I can gain strength from your Word and rest in Your wisdom and mercy.

With My Hands

First Tuesday of Advent

November 29

Psalms 42: 2-4

As the deer longs for streams of water,
so my soul longs for you, O God.
My soul thirsts for God, the living God.
When can I enter and see the face of God?
My tears have been my bread day and night,
as they ask me every day, "Where is your God"?

Psalms 119:17-18

Be kind to your servant that I may live,
that I may keep your word.
Open my eyes to see clearly
the wonders of your law.

Sirach 2: 1-6

My child, when you come to serve the Lord, prepare yourself for trials.	Accept whatever happens to you; in periods of humiliation be patient.
Be sincere of heart and steadfast, and do not be impetuous in time of adversity.	For in fire gold is tested, and the chosen, in the crucible of humiliation.
Cling to him, do not leave him, that you may prosper in your last days.	Trust in God, and he will help you; make your ways straight and hope in him.

Sirach 1: 23-27

Until the right time, the patient remain calm,
then cheerfulness comes back to them.

Until the right time they hold back their words;
then the lips of many will tell of their good sense.

Among wisdom's treasures is the model for knowledge;
but godliness is an abomination to the sinner.

If you desire wisdom, keep the commandments,
and the Lord will bestow her upon you;

For the fear of the Lord is wisdom and discipline;
faithfulness and humility are his delight.



Dear Lord, As Advent begins, I hear you calling my name. And I am astonished! So often, I move through this big world feeling as if I don't belong anywhere. Even in the midst of family, I can feel a stranger. But I do belong. I belong to You. You have called to me and said, "You are mine." Mine. I long to belong that way, to be completely Yours. Please keep calling throughout these weeks of preparation. I promise to keep listening.



There is an urgency to Advent, and also, a sense that it is hemmed in with sadness. December marks the end of the calendar year, calling to us to bring to fruition all the lofty plans we made in January. Or perhaps we let those plans go somewhere around midsummer and now, we just lament our lack. At the same time, there is pressure to be happy, not necessarily joyful, but happy in the 24-Days-to-Christmas-sense. But maybe we're just not.

Happy, that is.

Because maybe our lives look nothing like the Hallmark Channel near the end of hour two of whatever that night's offering is. We are not filled with the laughter and joy and downright twinkle of the season. We are just ordinary—here with ordinary unfinished tasks, before the end of an ordinary semester, looking towards a rather ordinary holiday.

We can't quite put our fingers on it, but we are out of synch with the general mood of the season.

We are thirsty. We are the deer longing for water, needing sustenance. We are at Mile 10 of a half marathon, desperately sorry we skipped the last Gatorade station. If we want to get to Christmas without falling over in a great, sorrowful heap, we need to cultivate the habit of opening our Bibles. We have to stop each morning and drink deep of the Word of God. Here is where we find what we truly need to prepare for Christmas.

Water is basic to our survival. If you've ever been just a little dehydrated, you know how it feels to wilt. How it slows everything down and clouds our thinking. We feel the urgency, but we might not recognize that it's thirst that drives the sense that we need something now.

You need something now. You are impatient and it's difficult to be still. You want to get on with your day—to fix all the things you think need fixing. He tells you to sit with Him a moment or two (or even half an hour).

The Holy Spirit is behind that urgent sense of thirst. You are panting for Him.

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Drink deeply of His Word. At the same time, as we drink, God calls us to be patient. In His word is the wisdom we need, the true treasure of the season. Sit still, patiently absorbing the love He has for you in scripture. Remain calm. Let all things be done decently and in order. (1Corinthians 14:40)

Do you hear Him? Give Him a chance to talk. Let His words fill you. Drink deep. And then wait. The living water of the Word will revive you. I promise.

Patience. He's coming. He'll meet you.



Let's make a plan. When will you find time for this study over the next month? Write it down. In this space, commit to the Lord that you will meet Him. Set a time; make a date. A date with God.

Now, think about the other things that will nurture you this season. Can you commit to eating well, regularly and wisely, not falling prey to the Christmas cookies you froze so that the kids won't eat them, but which, you discovered defrost nicely in fifteen seconds and can be eaten before those kids see you sneaking? Choose food that gives you sustenance.

Do you need to get outside every day? To run three miles a day? To talk with your mom on the phone for just a few minutes? To nap when the baby naps?

Right now, make a list. At the top, write Nurturing Myself. Spend some time thinking about what that looks like, and truly create a thoughtful list.

Promise yourself and your Lord that you will consult the list frequently throughout Advent and you will act upon it daily.

You will reach Christmas healthy and whole, filled with Him and with the bounty He has provided for you. You only have to get to that stream and drink.
