Advent Devotional December 11, 2026

Scripture

Psalm 102

Hear my prayer, O Lord;
let my cry come to you.
2 Do not hide your face from me
in the day of my distress.
Incline your ear to me;
answer me speedily in the day when I call.

3 For my days pass away like smoke,
and my bones burn like a furnace.
4 My heart is stricken and withered like grass;
I am too wasted to eat my bread.
5 Because of my loud groaning,
my bones cling to my skin.
6 I am like a desert owl of the wilderness,
like a little owl of the waste places.
7 I lie awake;
I am like a lonely bird on the housetop.
8 All day long my enemies taunt me;
those who deride me use my name for a curse.
9 Indeed, I eat ashes like bread
and mingle tears with my drink,
10 because of your indignation and anger,
for you have lifted me up and thrown me aside.
11 My days are like a lengthening shadow;
I wither away like grass.

12 But you, O Lord, are enthroned forever;
your name endures to all generations.
13 You will rise up and have compassion on Zion,
for it is time to favor it;
the appointed time has come.
14 For your servants hold its stones dear
and have pity on its dust.
15 The nations will fear the name of the Lord
and all the kings of the earth your glory.
16 For the Lord will build up Zion;
he will appear in his glory.
17 He will regard the prayer of the destitute
and will not despise their prayer.

18 Let this be recorded for a generation to come,
so that a people yet unborn may praise the Lord:
19 that he looked down from his holy height,
from heaven the Lord looked at the earth,

20 to hear the groans of the prisoners,
to set free those who were doomed to die,
21 so that the name of the Lord may be declared in Zion
and his praise in Jerusalem,
22 when peoples gather together,
and kingdoms, to serve the Lord.

23 He has broken my strength in midcourse;
he has shortened my days.
24 "O my God," I say, "do not take me away
at the midpoint of my life,
you whose years endure
throughout all generations."

25 Long ago you laid the foundation of the earth,
and the heavens are the work of your hands.
26 They will perish, but you endure;
they will all wear out like a garment.
You change them like clothing, and they pass away,
27 but you are the same, and your years have no end.
28 The children of your servants shall live secure;
their offspring shall be established in your presence.

Devotion

The Rev. Amy Newell '22, Board Member

Christmas is a difficult time for me. I am grateful for the birth of Jesus, but I succumb to the expectations of everything surrounding Christmas. There's just so much to do—for everyone—at the same time. And so much pressure to "get it right." Exhaustion sets in. The excitement of the season is forgotten, leaving me to feel isolated and alone and hurt as I search for the peace, love, joy, and hope of the season.

"I am like a lonely bird on the housetop." (v. 7)

I suspect that I'm not the only one. In fact, I know that I'm not the only one. I see other "Christmas zombies" stumbling around. That's why the words of the Psalmist speak to me. The Psalmist understands how I feel, because they feel the same way. We are broken and hurting people who need to feel close to the God who came to be close to us, and we desire connection with others, too.

When "the appointed time [had] come," (v. 13) Jesus went to great lengths to be born, so that he could immerse himself in the human experience. Not as a distant God, but as a God who came near, right when we needed him most. "So that a people yet unborn may praise the Lord." (v. 18)

And Jesus continues to walk beside us, tenderly plucking every lonely bird off the housetop and inviting us into deep and meaningful relationship—guiding us toward one another as well, into a flock to love and support each other. That is the beauty of Christmas—the presence of Jesus made available to people who are lonely or hurting or struggling so they can know that they aren't alone and that someone cares.

Prayer

Loving God, we stand in awe of Your willingness to come near to us in our struggles and our loneliness. Raise our awareness up to Your presence, and grant us hope beyond this present moment as we wait for Your birth. Guide us to our flock, and open our hearts to make room for You and for each other, so that we can praise You together and experience the wholeness of our Lord and Savior. Amen.