Advent Devotional December 14, 2026

Scripture

2 Peter 1:1–11

Simeon Peter, a servant and apostle of Jesus Christ,

To those who have received a faith as equally honorable as ours through the righteousness of our God and Savior Jesus Christ:

2 May grace and peace be yours in abundance in the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord.

3 His divine power has given us everything needed for life and godliness, through the knowledge of him who called us by his own glory and excellence. 4 Thus he has given us, through these things, his precious and very great promises, so that through them you may escape from the corruption that is in the world because of lust and may become participants of the divine nature. 5 For this very reason, you must make every effort to support your faith with excellence, and excellence with knowledge, 6 and knowledge with self-control, and self-control with endurance, and endurance with godliness, 7 and godliness with mutual affection, and mutual affection with love. 8 For if these things are yours and are increasing among you, they keep you from being ineffective and unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. 9 For anyone who lacks these things is blind, suffering from eye disease, forgetful of the cleansing of past sins. 10 Therefore, brothers and sisters, be all the more eager to confirm your call and election, for if you do this, you will never stumble. 11 For in this way, entry into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ will be richly provided for you.

Devotion

The Rev. Jeffrey D. Bergeson ’14

Advent is a time of preparation for celebrating the arrival of Jesus Christ. This often involves taking an inventory of our lives using biblical lists, such as 2 Peter 1:5-7. Am I adequately virtue-stacking my life of faith, like a precariously overfilled Dagwood sandwich? Am I adding to my faith excellence, and, on top of that, knowledge, and self-control, and endurance, and godliness, and mutual affection, topping it all off and trying to hold it all together with a toothpick-pierced olive of love?

When I judge myself against biblical lists like these to try to manage and manufacture my spiritual growth, it is “ineffective and unfruitful.” But there’s some joyfully good news here.

Verse nine tells us that if we lack growth in these qualities, we’ve got a vision problem. Perhaps we could say that we’re looking at the wrong things. I’d like to suggest that we’re not meant to focus on the items on the list, but the source of them. Verse nine concludes that if we’re not experiencing this kind of growth, it’s because we’re “forgetful of the cleansing of past sins.” In other words: focus on Jesus and what he has already done for you, not as entitlement, but as a gracious gift.

Similarly, verses three and four emphasize that “His divine power has given us everything needed for life and godliness.” God provides this—not us. Jesus’ own glory and excellence accomplish this—not ours. God unilaterally (Trini-laterally?) gives and fulfills these “precious and very great promises” to us, empowering us to “escape” the empty, self-centered, self-protective, self-promoting systems of survival and enter the fulfilling life of faith as “participants of the divine nature.”

We are instructed to “make every effort to” increase these good spiritual traits, but not by focusing on the Dagwood sandwich of faith. We “make every effort”—note that this is plural/communal, not singular/individual—by maintaining our focus on the One who is faithful, remembering that Christ cleanses us of our sins, graciously gives us all that we need for godly living, and calls us together into the Trinitarian fellowship of love as participants in the divine nature.

Prayer

Lord Jesus Christ, thank you for taking on our human nature that we may participate in Your divine nature. Gracious God, by Your sanctifying Spirit, help us to see, know, love, and reflect Christ more clearly, that others may be drawn into Your eternal kingdom and divine fellowship of love. Amen.