

Advent Devotional December 23, 2023

Scripture

Jeremiah 31:10-14

10 Hear the word of the LORD, O nations, and declare it in the coastlands far away; say, "He who scattered Israel will gather him, and will keep him as a shepherd a flock." 11 For the LORD has ransomed Jacob, and has redeemed him from hands too strong for him. 12 They shall come and sing aloud on the height of Zion, and they shall be radiant over the goodness of the LORD, over the grain, the wine, and the oil, and over the young of the flock and the herd; their life shall become like a watered garden, and they shall never languish again. 13 Then shall the young women rejoice in the dance, and the young men and the old shall be merry. I will turn their mourning into joy, I will comfort them, and give them gladness for sorrow. 14 I will give the priests their fill of fatness, and my people shall be satisfied with my bounty, says the LORD.

Devotion

The Rev. Amy Newell '22

By this time in the holiday season I've had enough. I'm tired and my Christmas spirit is gone. I have nothing left to give, and I am counting down the days to Christmas. Not because I am excited, but because I want it to be over. The Christmas list has worn me down. Not the Nice or Naughty List. The list of things I have to do. And the list of constant problems: cranky customers, staffing issues, inventory shortages, extra expenses and late nights. As God ransomed Israel, I need God to ransom me from this holiday madness.

Every year I make a conscious effort to stay focused on the true meaning of Christmas. Promising myself that I'm going to enjoy this season of wonder and excitement. And revel in the love of God who left everything to be born of a woman. To. Redeem. Me. Offering the perfect gift. The ultimate gift of hope, peace, joy, and love. But then December 23 rolls around and I'm ready to give up.

Jeremiah paints a picture of what Christmas joy can look like. Similar to a scene from one of those Christmas movies, where everyone is happy, blissfully walking in the snow to deliver homemade cookies before returning to their beautifully decorated home. If we truly accept the gift of Christmas, the birth of our Lord and Savior, we can be radiant over the goodness of the Lord. We can sing aloud and rejoice in the dance and be merry. Our life can be like a watered garden, and we may never languish again. This is what I want my Christmas season to look like. The Holy Trinity has it all wrapped up for me. Now all I have to do is accept it.

Prayer

God of all peace, we thank you and we praise you for the gift of your Son. Forgive us for losing sight of your redemption. We ask that you turn our mourning into joy, giving us gladness for sorrow, and teaching us to be satisfied with your bounty. Amen.