

MON.
November
25

Isaiah 2:1-5

The mountain of the LORD's temple will be established . . . ; it will be exalted above the hills, and all nations will stream to it (Isa. 2:2).

CHRIST'S BODY: PROMISE OF HOPE

LECRECIA M. ALI

Living cross-culturally for most of my life has blessed me to witness many nations coming together, worshiping the Lord. I have experienced candlelight services where we have sung *Silent Night* in six different languages. I have attended Bible studies with women from three or four different countries at a time.

The idea that this unity of all nations could be a permanent blessing indeed promises hope for our world today. Radicalization, fracturing, and polarization of societies and countries have left many without hope. Yet, Isaiah sees in this vision from the Lord a day when all nations will stream to the mountain of the Lord's temple.

This passage explains that not only will all nations go up to the mountain of the Lord, but they will do so peacefully. Nations will hammer their swords into plows and spears into pruning hooks. Countries will no longer fight against one another.

We, Christ's body, the church, living in the already/not-yet kingdom, are that very promise of hope. As we live together in harmony and unity, the nations will stream to the Lord's temple, and war will be no more.

*We've a song to be
sung to the nations
That shall lift their
hearts to the Lord.*

"We've a Story to Tell to the Nations" by H. Ernest Nichol

**I was glad when
they said to me,
"Let us go to
the house of the
LORD!" Our feet are
standing within
your gates, O
Jerusalem
(Psalm 122:1-2).**

Please pray:

For Christians in the Eurasia region who are persecuted for their faith.

TUES.
November
26

Isaiah 9:1-7

The people walking in darkness have seen a great light; on those living in the land of deep darkness a light has dawned (Isa. 9:2).

LIGHT IN DARKNESS OR DARKNESS IN LIGHT?

LECRECIA M. ALI

I wonder if we often focus on the *darkness* instead of the *light* in this passage. We quote this verse during times of hardship, loss, and trouble. There is so much sin, difficulty, and pain in our world; focusing on the darkness we face is easy. The point of quoting this scripture is often to instill hope for those in darkness. I wonder, however, if it often just emphasizes the darkness instead.

The other night I was sleeping, and a light woke me up. I checked to see if one of my children had turned on a light or if someone had opened the door to the hallway. As it turned out, it was only the light from my watch. That little bit of light was enough to wake me from my slumber.

Isaiah isn't talking about a little watch-face light. The people living in darkness have seen a *great light!* The great light has dawned in the land, and we don't need to worry about the darkness we live in any longer. The darkness only emphasized how great the light is. Jesus is the light of the world, the light of hope.

*No darkness have we
who in Jesus abide;
The Light of the world
is Jesus.*

“The Light of the Word Is
Jesus” by Philip P. Bliss

**The Son is the
radiance of God's
glory and the exact
representation
of his being,
sustaining all
things by his
powerful word
(Hebrews 1:3).**

Please pray:

That many people in
Albania will come to know
Christ and receive the
fullness of the Holy Spirit.

WED.
November
27

Jeremiah 29:4-13

“For I know the plans I have for you,” declares the LORD, “plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future” (Jer. 29:11).

ENCOURAGEMENT FOR THE BODY

LECRECIA M. ALI

My first memory of this verse is having it written inside a high school graduation card. A well-wisher quoted this verse as a hopeful message as I went off to college and into adulthood.

The larger context of this verse shows that God’s encouragement is so much larger than an individual “well-wish.” The prophet Jeremiah wrote to the exiles who were struggling in Babylon. They were in the midst of an identity crisis. If they were not God’s people in Jerusalem, who were they?

Jeremiah shared God’s plan for them in their exile. They were to continue to live their lives in the hope that God is, as always, in control. The Babylonians didn’t defeat God. The defeat of the Israelites was not God abdicating His throne. God was, is, and always will be the God Almighty, and this exile did not defeat the plans He was bringing to fruition in the Israelites’ lives.

We, the body of Christ, also find God’s plan for us in the same manner: by praying—for He listens; by seeking the Lord wholeheartedly—for we will find Him. We live in this great hope.

*The Lord has
promised good to me,
His word my hope
secures.*

“Amazing Grace” by John
Newton

**Praise our God,
all peoples, let the
sound of his praise
be heard; he has
preserved our lives
and kept our feet
from slipping.
For you, God,
tested us; you
refined us like silver
(Psalm 66:8-10).**

Please pray:

For the development of
Christian leaders in Albania.

THURS.
November
28

Luke 1:68-79

Because of the tender mercy of our God, by which the rising sun will come to us from heaven to shine on those living in darkness (Luke 1:78-79).

SON-RISE

LECRECIA M. ALI

When I think of winter in the northern hemisphere, I think of cold, short, dreary days. Add to that the complexities of the end of daylight saving, and it is not unusual to begin and end one's work days in complete darkness.

While Zechariah might not have experienced the darkness of working in an office building cut off from sunlight, he recognized that the world was living in spiritual darkness. If one looks with God's eyes, it doesn't take long to identify spiritual darkness in our societies and countries today. So many stumbling in the dark, living day to day without any light.

But oh, those glorious days in winter when the sun rises without cloud cover! When the days begin to lengthen, one can see a glimpse of the sunny days ahead in spring. This is the excellent news of Jesus Christ. He is the *Son* rising out of God's tender mercies shining on all those living in darkness. He is shining His light into our dark lives and inviting us to be a reflection of His light back to the rest of the world.

*He is the Light; in
Him is no darkness.
Ever I'm walking
close to His side.*

"Heavenly Sunlight" by
Henry J. Zelle

**For God, who said,
"Let light shine out
of darkness," made
his light shine in
our hearts to give
us the light of the
knowledge of God's
glory displayed in
the face of Christ
(2 Corinthians 4:6).**

Please pray:

That many people in
Armenia will come to know
Christ and receive the
fullness of the Holy Spirit.

FRI.
November
29

John 1:1-13

In him was life, and that life was the light of all mankind (John 1:4).

LIGHT IS LIFE

LECRECIA M. ALI

It is so easy to compartmentalize life. We talk about work life and family life. We think about church life and home life. There are those obsessed with their love lives or the number of lives left in their video game. We talk about plant life and animal life. We can begin to think that all these different lives also have different origins or sources.

The reality is that all life is in Christ. The kind of “life” we find in this verse is comprehensive. It means all aspects of our lives—spiritual, physical, emotional, work, home—all have their origin and source in Christ Jesus. As we pursue holiness, we must move toward integrating all aspects of our lives under the Lordship of Jesus.

Jesus gives us the light we need. The next time you mention something about your work life to an acquaintance, ask Christ to shed His light on that aspect of your life. Allow Christ’s life to be the light in every facet of your life.

Jesus, my King, my wonderful Savior, All of my life is given to Thee.

“Wonderful Savior” by J. M. Harris

The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it (John 1:5).

Please pray:

For the development of Christian leaders in Armenia.

SAT.
November
30

John 14:22-31

Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid (John 14:27).

PEACE IS PRESENCE

LECRECIA M. ALI

Peace. It seems to be the most elusive thing in the world. We pray for peace in the Middle East, and the fighting continues. We pray for peace in our country, and conflict remains. We pray for peace in our families, and see tensions flare. We can even seek peace in nature or spa-like settings and find that peace still eludes us. It reminds me of Jeremiah 8:11: “Peace, peace,” they say, when there is no peace.”

Ronald Reagan, Mahatma Gandhi, and Martin Luther King Jr. all have quotes about peace that are easy to find online. Mother Teresa also talked about peace. “Peace begins with a smile.” Yet, none of these quotes can fully grasp Christ’s peace. Christ’s peace is not like the world’s peace. It is not the absence of conflict, a serene setting, or being one with nature or yourself.

Christ’s peace is the very presence of God with us. It is a fruit of the Spirit and the presence of the Spirit in us. In the presence of God, we can do just what Jesus said and keep our hearts untroubled and without fear. He is our peace.

There’s a peace in my heart that the world never gave, A peace it cannot take away.

“Constantly Abiding” by
Anne S. Murphy

I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world (John 16:33).

Please pray:

That many people in the Azores will come to know Christ and receive the fullness of the Holy Spirit.

SUN.
December
1

Psalm 89:1-8

I will sing of the LORD's great love forever;
with my mouth I will make your faithfulness
known through all generations (Ps. 89:1).

JOY COMES IN DECLARING HIS FAITHFULNESS

LECRECIA M. ALI

Recently, I was sharing a story with my 16-year-old daughter. It was just an ordinary, everyday story of my life, but when I finished, she exclaimed, "I didn't know God did that for you!"

It is easy to skip over the stories in our lives that declare God's faithfulness, and forget to share them with the young people in our lives. So much of God's work on earth and in our lives goes unnoticed. Yet throughout Scripture, there are reminders to share the stories of God's faithfulness and His love with all generations. When we take the time to recount and remember all that God has done, we really can sing of the Lord's great love forever.

This passage also talks about God establishing His faithfulness in heaven itself. The heavens declare God's glory, but we, His people, declare His faithfulness on the earth. Let us make sure that we take time at this start of the month leading into Christmas to share with all those around us, especially the young people in our lives, about God's faithfulness to us. There truly is no one like our God.

Tell me the old, old story . . . Of Jesus and His glory.

"Tell Me the Old, Old Story"
by Katherine Hankey

These commandments that I give you today are to be on your hearts. Impress them on your children (Deuteronomy 6:6-7).

Please pray:

For the development of Christian leaders in the Azores.