

# Waiting Here For You

*An Advent Journey of Hope*

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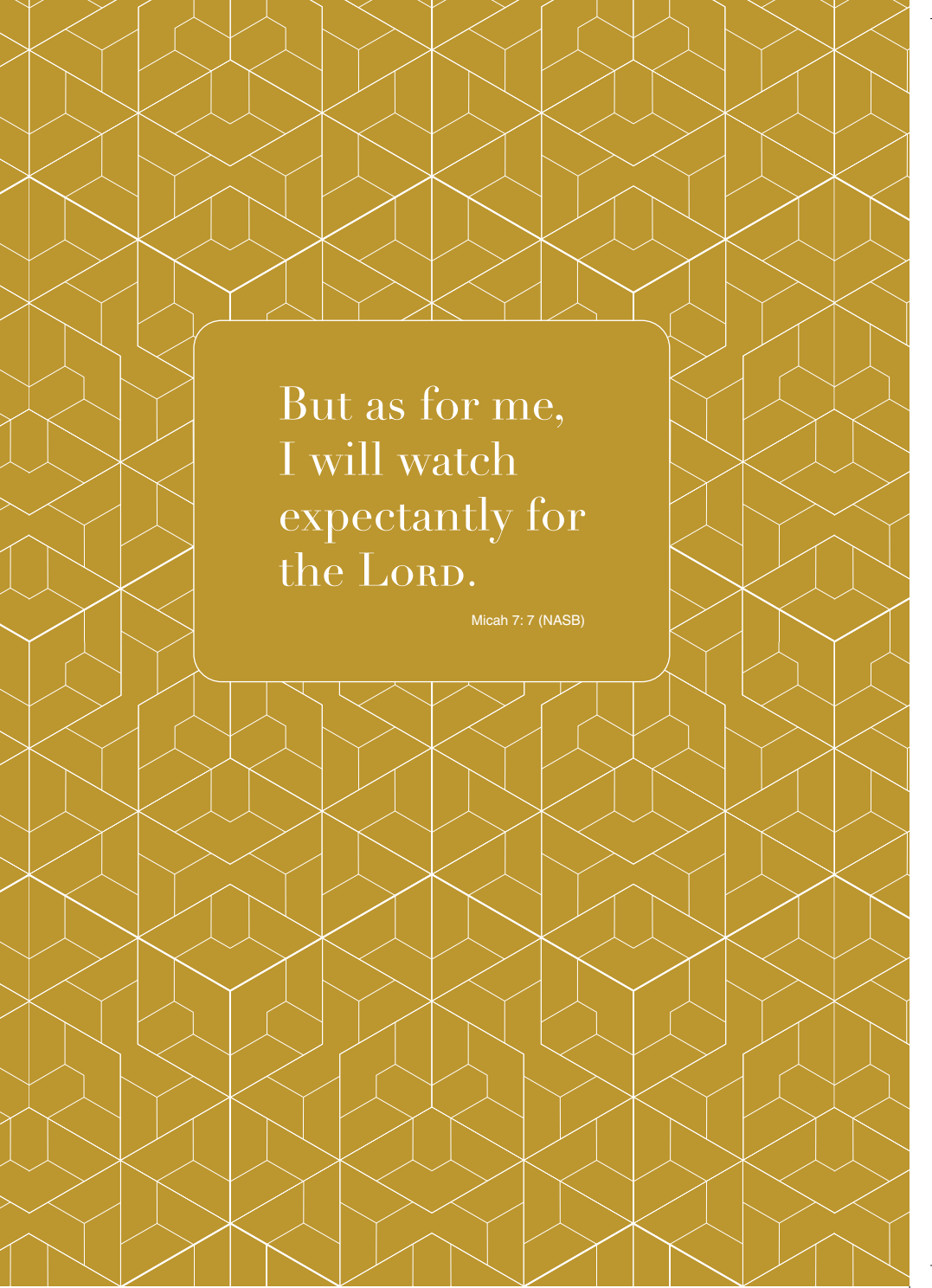
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But as for me,  
I will watch  
expectantly for  
the LORD.

Micah 7:7 (NASB)

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God works while we wait.

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## Introduction

# What Are You Waiting For?

Welcome to the season of Advent, a celebration that traditionally spans the four Sundays leading up to Christmas. And, welcome to *Waiting Here for You*, a devotional guide filled with hope for everyone who is waiting for something or someone. Whether you are waiting on a resolution, a diagnosis, a relationship, a breakthrough, or a rescue, God has a message of hope for you.

*Advent* simply means arrival—in the case of Christmas we celebrate the arrival of Jesus, the greatest gift ever given to the world. For on a chaotic night in the little town of Bethlehem a miracle happened. Down the slope of a hill, in a cave carved out by the wind and rain, a place where animals took shelter in the storm, a Savior was born who would take away the sins of the world.

But Jesus didn't arrive without a wait. While you and I simply turn the page, moving effortlessly from the

end of the Old Testament promises to the opening of Matthew's Gospel, it wasn't quite that easy. Four hundred years of silence spanned the gap between the final prophecies spoken in Malachi (the last Old Testament book) and the birth of Christ.

Imagine four hundred years without any recorded word from God—no voice, no prophet, nothing. Imagine the agony of waiting, and the struggle to keep faith in the promises given long before. You can almost hear the questions being passed from one generation to the next. Had God vanished? Was He ever really there? Was faith in Him just a waste?

Suddenly, when the time was right, Bethlehem's fields

lit up like noonday as angels proclaimed, *Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace among men on whom his favor rests.*

The wait was over. The silence was broken. Heaven unleashed thunderous applause. And in a feeding trough, Jesus was born. God in human flesh! The Son of God had become the

Son of Man. Emmanuel—God with us!

Christmas is a story of longing fulfilled. That's why it gives us reason to celebrate the goodness and nearness of God in the midst of our waiting seasons. As we struggle with our own sense of silence, and as we strain to see God at work in our convoluted lives, Christmas urges us

“The wait was over.  
The silence was  
broken. Heaven  
unleashed thunderous  
applause. And in  
a messy manger,  
Jesus was born.”

on by reminding us that God will come through on His promises.

Sadly, the frenzy we call the *holiday season* is a mad dash of tinsel and toys, driven more by consumerism than anything else. Ironically, the season that marks the arrival of the Prince of Peace has somehow begun to leave us feeling frantic, stressed, alone and peace-less. If we're not careful, the season can create a perfect storm of anxiety that will cause us to miss God's voice.

But, it doesn't have to be this way. If we ask Him, God will give us the grace to slow the pace. And He will help us remember how loved we are and how trustworthy He is. If we wait expectantly for Him, God will lift our eyes and draw near to us. He will remind us that waiting is not wasting when we are waiting on His plans to unfold. **He will anchor our hearts in the bedrock of His Faithfulness.**

My prayer is that this Advent devotion will encourage and fortify your faith so, ultimately, hope may bloom again.

Each day throughout this Advent journey you will find Scripture readings, Christian meditations, words of encouragement, and prayers to help you re-center your thoughts and confidence in God's purposes for your life.

I encourage you to carve out a few moments daily to embrace God's faithfulness through reflection, worship, and prayer. As you do, there's a good chance something new will be born in your heart...and when Christmas day arrives you will be able to truly celebrate what God has done and what He promises to do.

So let's get started. What are you waiting for?



## Story

# The Story of Christmas Grace

This wasn't how Aaron planned on spending Christmas. He glanced around the room at the tilting artificial tree in the corner, its pathetic single strand of twinkling lights reflecting off the wall. On a nearby table, a plastic platter hosted a collection of stale cookies, each shaped like an angel. But no amount of Christmas cheer could brighten the mood or bring comfort to the uneasy few scattered around the room. Unlike other happy Christmas destinations, no one was there by choice. Like Aaron's family, they all had been summoned by circumstances beyond their control.

It had been weeks since Aaron had first found the room tucked at the end of a third floor hallway. By now he could navigate the walk in his sleep. Circle into the south deck, traverse the long hallway from building B, take the north elevators to the third floor, two right turns

and another hallway to what seemed like a holding cell of hope. By now the minutes were dragging into hours and the hours into days. Outside, the sky faded from day to night to day so many times he had lost count. Sometimes he stayed all day, other times all night. And when exhaustion finally drew him into restless sleep, he would awaken with the fleeting possibility that this was all a crazy dream. And then he'd unfold the small piece of paper in his pocket and read his mom's handwritten note.

*We'll be okay. Love you.*

Aaron had figured out how the system worked. He knew his best chance to get an update on his mom's condition was to be in the little hallway between the ICU waiting room and the entrance to the patient area around 7:00 a.m. Fortunately, that morning Dr. Amer rounded the corner on cue. Their eyes met and the doctor crossed the hall with determination.

"Is your family here with you?" he said.

"No, it's just me this morning," Aaron said. "Is everything okay?"

Aaron knew the answer before he asked the question. He'd known the answer to that question since his dad passed away. The sudden loss and unrelenting grief made for three long, miserable years, and just when the pain was beginning to fade his mom was diagnosed with cancer.

She fought heroically through the first round of treatments and miraculously came back from the brink of death. The fight was fierce, but her faith was unshaken. Cancer roared, but she roared back, buoyed by a confidence in God that was like bedrock. Lying on her hospital

bed, nauseous from chemo, plugged into what seemed like a dozen machines, she would say, “Jesus beat death and so will I.”

When Aaron wrestled with her illness and questioned God’s goodness, she always found a way to reassure him. Even when she was exhausted and unable to speak she would leave handwritten notes waiting by her bedside.

*Just resting. Don’t worry. Love, Mom.*

*It’s going to be okay. Love, Mom.*

But this time it was harder to be optimistic. The cancer was back with a vengeance. The treatments that once saved her life were proving ineffective. Complications were creeping in from every angle and each one seemed to open the door to a whole new set of challenges. The specialists at St. Luke’s were running out of options. She had been in the hospital this time since the day before Thanksgiving, and on more than one occasion it looked like the end had come. Her unstable condition made it difficult to leave her side, but the days turned into weeks and the demands of life outside the waiting room walls made not leaving impossible. Somehow in the blur, Christmas had come and Aaron’s family was learning the hard way that cancer doesn’t care what day it is.

Matt, Aaron’s older brother, had flown home to Chicago to be with his wife and their three small children for Christmas morning. Juggling his desire to be near his mom, combined with his job as a commodity trader was bringing him to the breaking point. Matt was scheduled to return in two days. Anna, Aaron’s little sister, made the hour-long drive home the previous night to get some

much needed sleep. Last week she and her husband Garrett were informed that their long-awaited adoption was finally going through—at least that’s what they were hoping for.

Anna and Garrett had spent five grueling years on a merry-go-round of disappointment. Once, their hearts were set on a little girl only to have the birth mom change her mind at the very last minute. Another time the courts intervened. Earlier in the year they actually held their new baby boy, but just before the allotted time expired the father decided not to sign the adoption papers.

In the fall they switched to a local agency that placed babies born to moms addicted to drugs and alcohol and were told to be ready by mid-January. So, with Anna’s mom clinging to life, they were once again in the prep mode, doing what it seemed they perpetually found themselves doing—waiting for a baby to come.

In the hallway it was just Aaron and Dr. Amer.

“She asked for you,” Dr. Amer said. “She asked if the three of you were here.”

“She spoke?”

“Yes.”

“Seriously?”

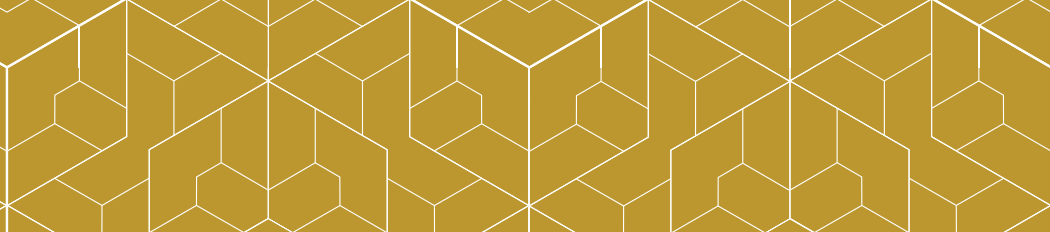
Dr. Amer nodded with a surprised look on his face.

Aaron rushed passed Dr. Amer and pushed through the doors to the ICU patient area. His mom had hardly been awake in the past seventy-two hours, let alone conscious enough to speak. Breaking protocol, he hurried past the nurse’s station without calling to see if a visit was allowed. He reached room number seven and stepped inside.

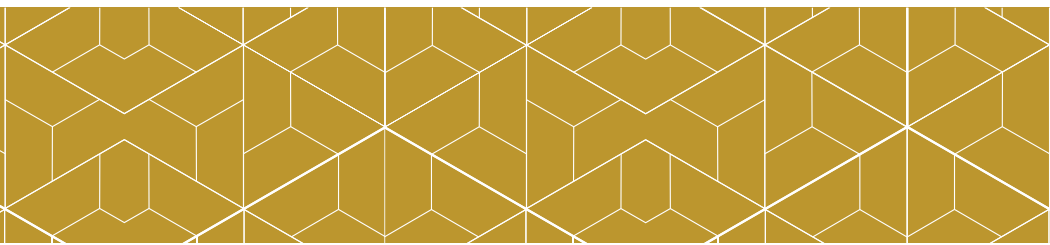
She was lying in her bed with her face turned away from the door. The blinds were open, but the morning light fell flat into the room. Could she really be awake and alert? Aaron crept up to her bedside without making a sound.

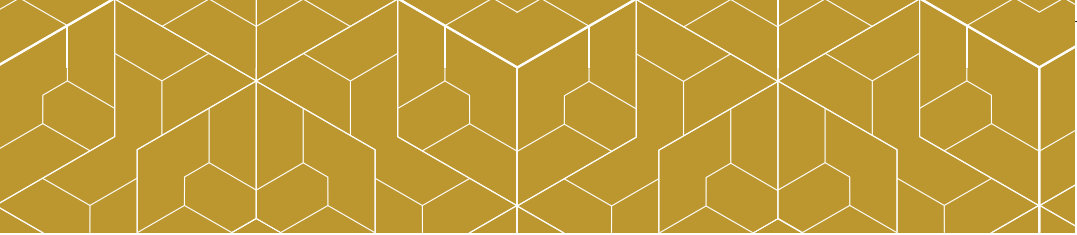
“Mom?”

To be continued . . .

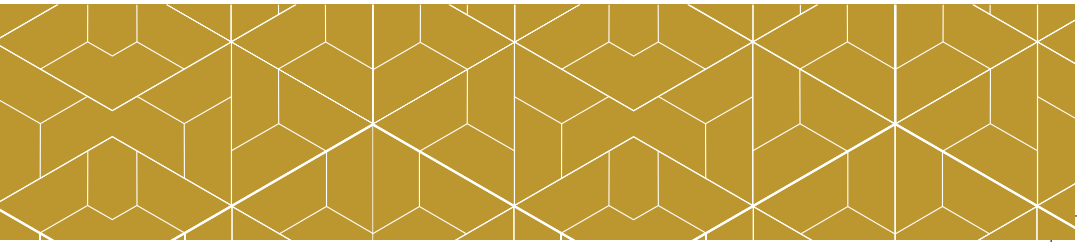


week **1** one





God works  
while  
we wait.



# Just the Right Time



## Galatians 4:4–5 (ESV)

But when the fullness of time had come, God sent forth his Son, born of woman, born under the law, to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as sons (and daughters)\*.

\*(added by author)





## Reflection

While God rarely comes at *our* appointed time, He always comes at the *right* time. A Savior had been promised to God's people for centuries. And for centuries they longed and prayed for rescue to no avail. Yet on the right day, in the right place, at the right time, Jesus was born. Christmas reminds us that God comes through on His promise.

We are all waiting on something or someone, often wondering if God has forgotten us. Is that where you are today? In your waiting, let the birth of Christ encourage you. Just because God hasn't come through (as far as you can see), it doesn't mean He has abandoned you. This very minute He's working for His glory and for your good. Though circumstances say otherwise, God is moving right now to fulfill His long-appointed plans for you. Don't give up. Take hope in the manger and know that you are prized by Jesus. He stepped down from heaven for you. And just as he loved you that day, He loves you right now. And Jesus is with you, even in the storm.

## Meditation

### *Hark the Glad Sound*

Hark the glad sound! The Savior comes,  
The Savior promised long;  
Let ev'ry heart prepare a throne  
And ev'ry voice a song.  
He comes the pris'ners to release,  
In Satan's bondage held.  
The gates of brass before Him burst,  
The iron fetters yield.  
He comes the broken heart to bind,  
The bleeding soul to cure,  
And with the treasures of His grace  
To enrich the humble poor.

Our glad hosannas, Prince of Peace,  
Thy welcome shall proclaim,  
And heav'n's eternal arches ring  
With Thy beloved name.

Philip Doddridge, 1702–1751

# Prayer

*Father, meet me in the waiting, the place where I long for what is not fully in view. Still my heart and give me the ability to know that You are near.*

*I believe Your plans are good. I see it in the birth of Your only Son. But sometimes I struggle to see beyond the haze that surrounds me. Renew my confidence as I lift my eyes to You. Be glorified in my life during this season of expectation. Amen.*

# God Works While We Wait



**Lamentations 3:26 (NIV)**

It is good to wait quietly for the salvation of the LORD.



## Reflection

If we are honest, we all hate to wait. In fact, most often we say something like, “I can’t believe this is taking so long; it’s costing me time I don’t have!” That’s because most of us consider *waiting* to be *wasting*. But it’s not so with our God.

God works while we wait. Even when you can’t see what He is doing, God is always orchestrating the events of heaven and earth to accomplish His purposes for your life. Trust in His unfailing love—love that moved Him to send a Savior from heaven to restore and rescue you. God’s plans for your life will not be thwarted. Wait patiently, knowing that *waiting is never wasted when you are waiting on God*.

## Meditation

### *Come, Thou Long Expected Jesus*

Come, Thou long expected Jesus  
Born to set Thy people free;  
From our fears and sins release us,  
Let us find our rest in Thee  
Israel's strength and consolation,  
Hope of all the earth Thou art;  
Dear desire of every nation,  
Joy of every longing heart.

Born Thy people to deliver,  
Born a child and yet a King,  
Born to reign in us forever,  
Now Thy gracious kingdom bring.  
By Thine own eternal Spirit  
Rule in all our hearts alone;  
By Thine all sufficient merit,  
Raise us to Thy glorious throne.

Charles Wesley, 1707–1788

# Prayer

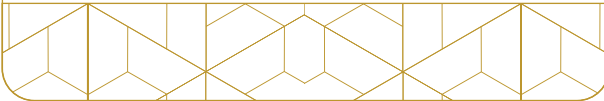
*Father, I am here waiting for You.  
My heart and hands are open to Your  
purposes and plans for my life. Give  
me the patience I so desperately need  
and lead me in my waiting. Though  
my feelings may not be there just  
yet, I believe You are moving on my  
behalf right this minute, protecting,  
defending, preparing, providing.  
Give me grace to keep trusting in You  
in the face of the gale force winds of  
doubt that are blowing all around me.  
Anchor my heart in You. Amen.*

# Choose God's Way



## Isaiah 30:15b,18 (NIV)

In repentance and rest is your salvation, in quietness and trust is your strength, but you would have none of it. Yet the LORD longs to be gracious to you; therefore he will rise up to show you compassion. For the LORD is a God of justice. Blessed are all who wait for him!





## Reflection

It's easy to bail on God at the first sign of trouble. We fret, we worry, we make new plans, we settle for short-cuts. We take matters into our own hands and soon feel the weight of anxiety and worry. But there is another way—the quiet way of rest and trust. God is sovereign (He runs the world) and He is in control. During this Advent journey, keep making the confident decision to choose God's way. Guard your heart from any voice that offers a “quick fix”. Instead, say, “Jesus, I will wait on You.”

The best things in life take time, and the payoff of doing things God's way is always better. But the enemy is crafty and determined to deceive us, trying to convince us that God's intentions are not good. Stay the course. Don't give in today. Believe for God's best and don't settle for less.

## Meditation

### *Creator of the Stars of Night*

Creator of the stars of night,  
Thy people's everlasting Light:  
O Christ, Redeemer, save us all  
And hear Thy servants when they call.

Thou, grieving that the ancient curse  
Should doom to death a universe,  
Hast found the healing, full of grace,  
To cure and save our ruined race.

O Thou, whose coming is with dread  
To judge the living and the dead,  
Preserve us from the ancient foe  
While still we dwell on earth below.

Text: Latin, 5th–10th century

Translated by John Mason Neale, 1818–1866, alt.

Stanzas 1, 2, & 5

# Prayer

*Father, Creator of the stars of night,  
I wait for You. You came to me when  
I was lost and couldn't find my way  
to You. As I continue this Advent  
journey, reveal the things I have  
counted on to fill my heart apart from  
You and give me the grace to lay them  
down. I will wait for You and trust  
You to protect me from my foes and  
give me all I need. Amen.*

# Jesus Sets You Free



## Isaiah 61:1–3 (NIV)

The Spirit of the Sovereign LORD is on me,  
because the LORD has anointed me  
to proclaim good news to the poor.  
He has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted,  
to proclaim freedom for the captives  
and release from darkness for the prisoners,  
to proclaim the year of the LORD's favor  
and the day of vengeance of our God,  
to comfort all who mourn,  
and provide for those who grieve in Zion—  
to bestow on them a crown of beauty  
instead of ashes,  
the oil of joy  
instead of mourning,  
and a garment of praise  
instead of a spirit of despair.  
They will be called oaks of righteousness,  
a planting of the LORD  
for the display of his splendor.

## Reflection

In Luke's Gospel Jesus made a powerful declaration when he said the promise spoken in Isaiah 61 was fulfilled through him. He claimed that He was the One who could set the prisoner free. He alone would lift up those who had been trampled by circumstances and shattered dreams. He would cause the blind to see.

So, if you are paralyzed by grief or blinded by anguish, Jesus is the place where healing begins. Even if your life has been reduced to ashes, Jesus has the power to rebuild and restore. Reach out for Him and let Him take your hand. He's not trying to take something from you, but to do something for you. Something He alone can do.

## Meditation

### *O Lord, How Shall I Meet You*

O Lord, how shall I meet You,  
How welcome You aright?  
Your people long to greet You, My hope,  
my heart's delight!  
O kindle, Lord most holy,  
A lamp within my breast,  
to do in spirit lowly  
all that may please You best.

I lay in fetters, groaning;  
You came to set me free.  
I stood, my shame bemoaning;  
You came to honor me.  
A glorious crown You give me,  
A treasure safe on high  
That will not fail or leave me  
As earthly riches fly.

Paul Gerhardt, 1607–1676  
Stanzas 1 & 3

# Prayer

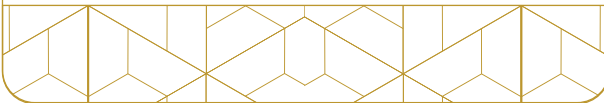
*Father, thank you that your mission all along has been to lift those who have been pounded by the waves of life, to free those imprisoned by addictions, sin and shame. Father, when I felt left behind for dead, discarded and forgotten, You sent Jesus to save my life. Give me the grace to rest in Your freedom today and to trust that you are not finished with me. Amen.*

# By His Wounds You Are Healed



## Isaiah 53:3–6 (ESV)

He was despised and rejected by men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief; and as one from whom men hide their faces he was despised, and we esteemed him not. Surely he has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows; yet we esteemed him stricken, smitten by God, and afflicted. But he was pierced for our transgressions; he was crushed for our iniquities; upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace, and with his wounds we are healed. We all like sheep have gone astray; we have turned—every one—to his own way; and the LORD has laid on him the iniquity of us all.





## Reflection

The arrival of Jesus on earth came at a high price. He gave up His rights as God and took on human flesh. And He came with the ultimate purpose of being wounded for our sin and shame. Though Jesus was innocent, He was willing to offer His life as payment for our sin. He was pierced for our wrongs and took guilt upon Himself.

The price Jesus paid cleared our account of wrong once and for all. Thus, victory over our hurt and pain is not found by delving deeper into our wounds, but by clinging to the wounds of Jesus. He was willing to take the blows and bear the scars. His wounds bring us healing, wholeness, and peace with our God. Every wrong you have done and every wrong that has been done to you has been swallowed up in every right that Jesus has done and in every wrong that has been done to Him. By His wounds you are healed.

## Meditation

### *From Depths of Woe I Cry to Thee*

From depths of woe I cry to Thee,  
In trial and tribulation;  
Bend down Thy gracious ear to me,  
Lord, hear my supplication.  
If Thou rememb'rest ev'ry sin,  
Who then could heaven ever win  
Or stand before Thy presence?

Thy love and grace alone avail  
To blot out my transgression;  
The best and holiest deeds must fail  
To break sin's dread oppression.  
Before Thee none can boasting stand,  
But all must fear Thy strict demand  
And live alone by mercy.

Therefore my hope is in the Lord  
And not in mine own merit;  
It rests upon His faithful Word  
To them of contrite spirit  
That He is merciful and just:  
This is my comfort and my trust.  
His help I wait with patience.

Martin Luther, 1483–1546,  
tr. Catherine Winkworth, 1827–1878, alt.  
Stanzas 1–3

# Prayer

*Father, thank You for the gift of  
your Son, the perfect One given  
for an imperfect one like me.  
Thank you that Jesus died the way  
He died so I can come to You just  
as I am. Jesus, give me grace to reach  
for Your scars, believing that when  
You suffered and bled for me,  
my wounds were healed.  
Let Your peace and power cover  
and heal my heart. Amen.*

# Seek and You Will Find



## Psalm 27:7–14 (NIV)

Hear my voice when I call, O LORD;  
be merciful to me and answer me.

My heart says of you, “Seek  
His face!”

Your face, LORD, I will seek.  
Do not hide your face from me,  
do not turn your servant away  
in anger;  
you have been my helper.

Do not reject me or forsake me, a  
God my Savior.

Though my father and mother forsake me,  
the LORD will receive me.

Teach me your way, LORD;  
lead me in a straight path  
because of my oppressors.

### **Psalm 27:7–14 (NIV), *continued***

---

Do not turn me over to the  
desire of my foes,  
for false witnesses rise up  
against me,  
spouting malicious accusations.  
I remain confident of this:  
I will see the goodness of  
the LORD  
in the land of the living.  
Wait for the LORD;  
be strong and take heart  
and wait for the LORD.

## Reflection

God is not hiding from you. Though it may seem like He has dropped off the radar, He is near. Yet to find Him you must patiently seek Him out. Just like you, God wants to be pursued. He wants to know that you believe He is worth searching for. Many say they can't find God; that they can't hear His voice. Yet, are they really seeking Him? If you want to be near God you must create space to seek Him. If you want to know Him, you must start by telling Him. Open His Word and set your gaze on Him. Ask Him to show you who He is. You'll discover that He is waiting to meet you where you are.

Seek and you will find. Knock and the door will be opened to you. Ask and it will be given to you.

## Meditation

### *The King Shall Come When Morning Dawns*

The King shall come when morning dawns  
And light triumphant breaks,  
When beauty gilds the eastern hills  
And life to joy awakes.

Oh, brighter than the rising morn  
When Christ, victorious, rose  
And left the lonesome place of death  
Despite the rage of foes.

Oh, brighter than that glorious morn  
Shall dawn upon our race  
The day when Christ in splendor comes  
And we shall see His face.

The King shall come when morning dawns  
And light and beauty brings.  
Hail, Christ the Lord! Your people pray:  
Come quickly, King of kings!

John Brownie, 1857–1925, alt.  
Stanzas 1, 3–5

# Prayer

*Father, I want to see Your face.  
Hear my cry and reveal Yourself to me  
as I make room for You to invade my  
life. I am desperate for more of You.  
I am here. I am knocking. Intersect my  
life today with a greater awareness  
of who You are. Please show me  
more of Your character and purpose  
as I set my heart on You. Amen.*

# Compassion Over Consumption

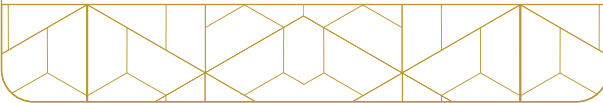
Today we pause to embrace the true spirit of Christmas.



## **Acts 20:35b**

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In the words of the Lord Jesus Himself, “It is more blessed to give than to receive.”





# Prayer

*Father, I thank You that You are a giver and not a taker, and You have given so freely to me. Help me see how much I have in You. Please give me the opportunity today to share with someone else what You have so freely entrusted to me. Amen.*