

CHRISTMAS ADVENT PRAYERS – CRAMLINGTON PARISH

Reflections on Psalm 23 & Luke 2 (*New Living Translation used for bible verses in red*)

Day 1	<p>“The LORD is my Shepherd; I have all that I need”</p> <p>Focus: on the goodness of God / the assurance of your safety & security when you choose to come under His care / As you acknowledge Him as LORD, His promise of provision for you in all circumstances & at all times</p> <p>Prayer Response: Tell the Lord your response to His love for you. Bring before Him those in your minds and hearts who do not yet know Him as their loving shepherd.</p>
Day 2	<p>“He lets me rest in green meadows”</p> <p>Focus: God knows our weakness. It’s ok to be tired and it’s ok to take time out to rest. He leads you to green meadows – to lifegiving sustenance spiritually, emotionally, physically – take time out - recharge your batteries with Him today.</p> <p>Prayer Response: Give the Lord those things that are draining you of your energy – offload your burdens to Him.</p>
Day 3	<p>“He leads me beside peaceful streams”</p> <p>Focus: To be led requires obedience on our part. We can trust the Lord to lead us into a place of peace. He invites us to drink from the water of life, to receive the infilling of His Holy Spirit</p> <p>Prayer Response: What is your reply to the Lord? Will you follow Him? Are you thirsty for Him? The Holy Spirit waits for us to ask Him to fill us - receive</p>
Day 4	<p>“He renews my strength”</p> <p>Focus: To renew – from broken to healed, from death to life, from despair to hope – it is God alone (our Creator) who is able to do this. Look to God our Rock, not to the aid of man, for our help comes from God alone. For God nothing is impossible – the impossible becomes possible.</p> <p>Prayer Response: Invite God in to your broken places. Come see what the Lord will do. Extend that invitation - into the lives of all in your sphere of influence and all whom He brings to your thoughts.</p>

Day 5

“He guides me along right paths”

Focus: Question -When do we need a guide? Answer – When we don’t know the right way to go! God has not stopped leading, are we still following?

Prayer Response: Seek the Lord’s plan for your life – Ask, and you will receive; seek, and you will find; knock, and the door will be opened to you. If you’ve diverted off-course, it is time to re-calibrate. Pray also for His revelation to be made known to those He brings to your mind now, who haven’t yet discovered His plan for their lives.

Day 6

“bringing honour to His name”

Focus: To honour is to give thanks and respect. To give credit where it is due. Children who honour their earthly parents bring them joy. The biblical command to honour our parents comes with the promise of long life and that all may go well with you – how much more is our heavenly father worthy of our honour and praise, who gives us the gift of eternal life.

Prayer Response: Thanks be to God for His indescribable gift in sending Jesus Christ to save us from our sin. May our lives honour and bring joy to our loving heavenly father.

Day 7

“Even when I walk through the darkest valley”

Focus: Even in darkness light dawns for the upright. The darkest day in history, Good Friday, was also the brightest. The light shines in the darkness and the darkness can never extinguish it. Satan’s plan backfired. You can’t keep the Son of God down. Friday’s here, but Sunday’s coming.

Prayer Response: Let the resurrection light of the living Lord Jesus Christ flood your soul with His light which overpowers the darkness. Do not fear to come into the light. There’s no valley He’s not been to the bottom of. He is willing and more than able to lift you from the pit. Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved. Pray for those you know who are currently in darkness to experience God’s light.

Day 8

“I will not be afraid, for You are close beside me”

Focus: Perfect love casts out fear. We love because He first loved us. You are not alone. Reach out your hand – the Lord is there.

Prayer Response: Holy Spirit of God fill me afresh today. Filled to be a blessing to others, so fill me to overflowing, that Your presence will flow out wherever & to whoever You send me to.

Day 9	<p>“Your rod & Your staff protect and comfort me”</p> <p>Focus: Discipline – ouch! And yet it shows we are children of a loving father. But there’s an extra dimension here – a shepherd uses a staff to draw sheep close to himself for intimate examination – do you know how precious to and loved by God you are?</p> <p>Prayer Response: Embrace God the Father’s love for you. Draw close to God - there’s safety in His presence.</p>
Day 10	<p>“You prepare a feast for me in the presence of my enemies”</p> <p>Focus: Abundance/ Extravagance/ Favoured – If God is for us, who can be against us. How difficult life is for those who fight against God – they’re never on the winning team!</p> <p>Prayer Response: Bless those who persecute you, in the name of Jesus, that God’s will be done in their lives, His Kingdom come on earth as in heaven.</p>
Day 11	<p>“You honour me by anointing my head with oil”</p> <p>Focus: God’s children are holy, set apart, dedicated to God, anointed to be a prophetic voice to the nations. With great power comes great responsibility.</p> <p>Prayer Response: Be bold, be strong for the Lord God is with you. God has given us a great commission, to go make disciples. Lord give me your boldness to speak for You to those that don’t yet know You.</p>
Day 12	<p>“My cup overflows with blessings”</p> <p>Focus: Your own personal cup. You belong – you are meant to be here. The love of God the Father provides in excess of what you can take in. And His love for you is good. God intends good not evil towards you. Blessings - what do I do with them? Blessed to be a blessing.</p> <p>Prayer Response: Thanks and praise be to God. Let me be generous, just as my heavenly father is generous to me.</p>
Day 13	<p>“Surely Your goodness and unfailing love will pursue me all the days of my life”</p> <p>Focus: I can’t escape God’s love, nor do I want to. Your name is God’s beloved. Our lives on earth may not be long, but eternity is forever.</p> <p>Prayer Response: In the words of an old chorus based on Song of Solomon: I will rejoice in You and be glad, I will extol Your love more than wine. Draw me after You and let us run together. I will rejoice in You and be glad.</p>

Day 14

“and I will live in the house of the LORD forever.”

Focus: I am the God of Abraham, not I was. He is the God of the living, not the dead (Mt 22v32). This life we live now is not the end. We shall not all, He says, necessarily sleep, but we shall all be changed (1 Cor 15v51). God’s house is huge.

Prayer Response: “I will not die; Instead I will live to tell what the Lord has done” (Ps 118v17).

Day 15

“...the Roman Emperor, Augustus, decreed that a census should be taken...Joseph..had to go to Bethlehem in Judea..He took with Him Mary, to whom He was engaged, who was now expecting a child.”

Focus: It is God that appoints those who govern and He will work through them, even if they don’t know Him. How difficult and uncomfortable that journey must have been for pregnant Mary.

Prayer Response: Pray for those in government that they will make wise and just decisions inspired by God, rather than the enemy. Pray for their protection – it’s not easy at the top and they are under tremendous pressure.

Intercede for expectant mothers at this time. Pray for good mental health for them and the children they are carrying.

Day 16

“And while they were there, the time came for her baby to be born.”

Focus: No midwife, no nurses, no consultant. Far from home. What a frightening position for a first-time mother.

Prayer Response: Intercede for the NHS & children being born at this time. Pray for refugees and those in a state of flux, or living in the developing world where there is no or limited access to medical care.

Day 17

“She gave birth to her firstborn son.”

Focus: Firstborn with all the imagery that entailed – the Jews were to bring their first fruits/first born to God. Dedicated to God for special use. How did Joseph feel? – perhaps mixed emotions as this was not his son by bloodline and yet God entrusted Jesus to His care – we don’t hear much from Joseph – perhaps he was the strong silent type, however he was entrusted to care for Mary and God’s own Son. What a privilege.

Prayer Response: Pray for children longing to be adopted to find forever families. Pray for protection of street children across the world and for their provision and blessing. Is the Lord asking you to somehow get directly involved?

Day 18 **"She wrapped Him snugly in strips of cloth and laid Him in a manger, because there was no lodging available for them."**

Focus: How shocking – no room for the Creator. All those homes missed out on the privilege of hosting royalty.

Prayer Response: Don't let my heart be cold or hard towards those in desperate need. Show me where I can make a difference Lord, remembering your word: "For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in. I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me."

Day 19 **"That night there were shepherds staying in their fields nearby, guarding their flocks of sheep."**

Focus: Unlikely candidates to be first to receive the gospel message – dirty, smelly, bottom of the social scale, poorly paid, outside the city walls and yet God our shepherd called the shepherds first. Do you think He was trying to tell us something?

Prayer Response: Forgive me Lord for when I haven't recognised you in the face of the underdog. In humility I come to you – I don't have much to offer, but speak Lord, for your servant is listening.

Day 20 **"Suddenly, an angel of the Lord appeared among them, and the radiance of the Lord's glory surrounded them."**

Focus: Take a step back and fresh look at this. See how amazing this is. Not many people have physically seen an angel sent from the throne room of God Himself and not many people have seen the Lord's glory. Be alert for God's voice to you – it may come in a way you are not expecting.

Prayer Response: Reflect on the awesomeness of God – His presence dispels the darkness, His presence is all powerful, majestic. He has NO equal. When He comes again, He will come in glory to judge the living and the dead. Lord I choose life, I choose Jesus, I choose to be in the Lamb's book of life.

Day 21 **"They were terrified, but the angel reassured them. "Don't be afraid!"**

Focus: God sends us a message, not to terrify us, but because there is good news for us. He has a rescue plan.

Prayer Response: Fear is the opposite of love. God is love. "Whoever abides in love abides in God, and God in him. In this way, love has been perfected among us, so that we may have confidence on the day of judgment; for in this world we are just like Him."

Fill me with your love God.

Day 22

"I bring you good news that will bring great joy to all people. The Saviour..the Messiah, the Lord – has been born today in Bethlehem, the city of David!"

Focus: Wherever we are, whatever our circumstances are, regardless of if we are in the back of beyond, there is a reason to be joyful and note this is even in the midst of suffering. To need a Saviour means we are in trouble and can't help ourselves. Jesus is our reason to be joyful in every circumstance and whatever season we are in.

Prayer Response: Spend time praising God today – sing aloud, make a drum, dance your dance.

Day 23

"..you will recognise Him by this sign: You will find a baby wrapped snugly in strips of cloth, lying in a manger."

Focus: Mary and Joseph had little material comfort to support this precious bundle. God provided somewhere warm and dry despite this.

Prayer Response: Pray for families struggling to provide for their children today. Pray for the work of the Hope Centre Foodbank and all who work to help the poor, the vulnerable and helpless – organisations like Toybox Charity, Shelter, Salvation Army, Tearfund. Pray for those without a home tonight to find safe and warm shelter.

Day 24

"Suddenly, the angel was joined by a vast host of others – the armies of heaven – praising God and saying: "Glory to God in highest heaven, and peace on earthy to those with whom God is pleased."

Focus: A powerful heavenly army, headed up by a tiny baby – makes you think. And unlike most human armies, this army speaks out a blessing of peace. Glory to God is where praise should be given. Glory given to men is abused – no man could live up to it, but Glory to God results in blessing to mankind.

Prayer Response: Glory to You God, even your weakness is stronger than man's strongest strength. All praise be Yours alone. You alone are worthy of our highest praise.

Day 25

"..the shepherds said to each other, "Let's go to Bethlehem! Let's see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has told us about." They hurried..and found Mary and Joseph. And there was the baby lying in the Manger. After seeing Him, the shepherds told everyone what had happened and what the angel had said to them about this child."

Focus: What was the shepherd's response to God's message? They didn't just amble along, they hurried to see for themselves, such was their excitement - and when they saw there was no stopping them – they couldn't help but go out and speak of what they had seen

Prayer Response: Praise you God for the gift of Jesus Christ Your Son. Awaken in me fresh excitement in response to your word, so that I will not be able to contain it, but – rather share your good news with others today.