

Watch



Discerning God's *kairos* in the midst of our daily *chronos*

ADVENT DEVOTIONS – WEEK 3
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SUNDAY | LUKE 1:18–24

Often, we see that for which we are looking and fail to notice much of what is around us. A familiar route that we travel regularly becomes mere background and we arrive at our destination with no recollection of what we passed along the way. Details in the spaces we occupy fade from consciousness until someone unfamiliar with them points them out. One of my children has a gift for noticing patterns and anomalies. The building where my office is located is historic with a big staircase that I use instead of the rather aged elevator. After years of this ascending and descending these stairs, one day this child went to work with me and pointed out the discrepancy in the stairs' materials between one of the floors: the treads went from black to white. In all the many footfalls upon them, I'd never before seen the marked difference. Once she pointed this out, the contrast was absolutely obvious, and yet

I had missed it time and time again. It strikes me in this passage about Zechariah's angelic visitation that in his inability to speak and tell those waiting for him outside the temple what happened, they name that he has seen a vision. How did they know? Were they watching for such divine happenings? On the lookout for the holy?

We need others to help us see and interpret things, people and places we might otherwise miss. We need the community of faith to discern the work of the Spirit when we cannot articulate what is happening within and around us. The members of the Body of Christ possess different gifts, varying perspectives and points of view. When Zechariah could not speak, the people of God took notice and recognized that something extraordinary had taken place that day in the temple and named the truth that he had seen a vision. This Advent, are we paying attention and watching for the movement of the Spirit, for evidence of God's inbreaking and the angels' speaking? Often, we see that for which we are watching and miss much of what we do not expect to see. This is the season for noticing and naming the coming and present kingdom of God. This is the season for listening to those around us with eyes to see the holy that we may well walk past daily until they point it out and it becomes utterly obvious.

Lord of angels and visions, we often fail to see you at work and present in holy spaces and everyday places. We forget to be on the lookout for you and ignore your signs and instructions. When we get distracted, send your Spirit to arrest our attention. Remove the scales from our eyes that prevent us from paying attention to you. Grant us the ability to not only notice you, but act on your Word. Amen.

MONDAY | JOHN 6:1–3

A large crowd is following Jesus because they saw the signs he was doing, the miracles of healing he performed. Do we see signs of Jesus at work in our world? In our lives? What signs get your attention and cause you to follow Jesus even now? Today, pay attention to where you see Jesus' healing power and make note of it.

Loving God, we often fail to see signs of your healing, neglecting to anticipate your miracles, thinking instead that such divine transformation happened only long ago. As we go about our day today, we pray for an openness to your Spirit that reveals that you still intervene and bring wholeness in surprising and grace-filled ways. Amen.

TUESDAY | ACTS 20:28-32

Pay careful attention to yourself and to the flock with which you have been entrusted. Paul, as he prepares to leave these new disciples, admonishes them to attend to God's instructions and be alert, lest false teachers lead them astray. Given how much information and disinformation comes our way on a daily basis, how do we pay attention to God's commandments and discern what is counter to the will of God?

Jesus, you teach us the will of God and promise to send your Spirit to remind us of all you said and instructed. At times, we get overwhelmed with the relentless rush of headlines, billboards and voices clamoring for our attention. Silence in us any voice but yours, so that we might pay close attention to you and therefore close attention to our own thoughts and actions and close attention to the needs of the world you came to save. Amen.

WEDNESDAY | GENESIS 1:3-4

One of the refrains of Genesis 1 is: "And God saw that it was good." The light, the water, the land, the vegetations, all of creation — God saw it all and declared it good. Imagine if we surveyed all that we encountered and noticed — and saw that it was good. Today as you see the world you inhabit, make a point to notice its goodness and name it so.

Creator God, you make the world and call it good. As we wake and work, rest and play, open our eyes to the holy goodness all around and even within us. Do not let us take for granted the goodness of the meals we eat, the goodness of the people we encounter, the goodness of the air we breathe and the landscapes we move through every day. May we, like you, see and declare: It is good. Amen.

THURSDAY | HABAKKUK 1:1-5

The writer of Habakkuk calls God to account, wanting to know why God does not set things right, bring justice and vindicate the righteous. God answers in verse 5: Look and see; wonder and be astounded. God is at work in ways that human beings would not believe even if told directly. Can you relate to Habakkuk's frustration? Where is God telling you to look and see, wonder and be astounded at what God is doing right now?

Loving God, you hear our cries of frustration, our pleas for your intervention and tell us to look and see, wonder and be astounded at the work you are doing in the world. When we are unable to see your providence and power, remind us yet again to wonder, to have holy curiosity, to remember that the kingdom is near, and Jesus is surely coming. Amen.

FRIDAY | LUKE 12:13-21

Jesus warns us to be on guard and keep watch for all kinds of greediness. Jesus tells us to keep a lookout for our own propensity to believe that our life's worth is measured in material goods. When have you believed life consists of an abundance of possessions? Be conscious today of your relationship to money and possessions. How does that relationship reflect, or not, your relationship to Jesus Christ?

Jesus, you enter the world as an infant, born in a stable to a family with little in the way of material possessions. You tell your followers to take nothing for their journey. You warn us to be on guard for greed. As we prepare for your birth, we pray to be given the faith to put you first so that all our priorities are rightly ordered. Amen.

SATURDAY | ISAIAH 9:1-2

Deep darkness resonates this year. The word in Hebrew can be translated as "shadow" or "death-shadow." The people in this passage know the reality of fear and suffering — a nearness to death and vulnerability that feels familiar right now. As you navigate the waning days of a difficult season, where do you see God's light breaking into the deep darkness?

God of the light no darkness can overcome, we confess to being weary, tired of worries that keep us up at night and ready for your promised rest. When we walk through the valley of the shadow of death, grant us the peace that passes understanding and the ability to see even a pinprick of your light that shows us a way forward. Amen.