

Monday 3rd January

Psalm 127

Unless the LORD builds the house, the builders labour in vain.

Unless the LORD watches over the city, the guards stand watch in vain.

**² In vain you rise early and stay up late, toiling for food to eat –
for he grants sleep to those he loves.**

³ Children are a heritage from the LORD, offspring a reward from him.

⁴ Like arrows in the hands of a warrior are children born in one's youth.

⁵ Blessed is the man whose quiver is full of them. They will not be put to shame when they contend with their opponents in court.

Colossians 2:8-end

⁸ See to it that no one takes you captive through hollow and deceptive philosophy, which depends on human tradition and the elemental spiritual forces of this world rather than on Christ.

⁹ For in Christ all the fullness of the Deity lives in bodily form, ¹⁰ and in Christ you have been brought to fullness. He is the head over every power and authority. ¹¹ In him you were also circumcised with a circumcision not performed by human hands. Your whole self ruled by the flesh was put off when you were circumcised by Christ, ¹² having been buried with him in baptism, in which you were also raised with him through your faith in the working of God, who raised him from the dead.

¹³ When you were dead in your sins and in the uncircumcision of your flesh, God made you alive with Christ. He forgave us all our sins, ¹⁴ having cancelled the charge of our legal indebtedness, which stood against us and condemned us; he has taken it away, nailing it to the cross. ¹⁵ And having disarmed the powers and authorities, he made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them by the cross.

Freedom from human rules

¹⁶ Therefore do not let anyone judge you by what you eat or drink, or with regard to a religious festival, a New Moon celebration or a Sabbath day.

¹⁷ These are a shadow of the things that were to come; the reality, however, is found in Christ. ¹⁸ Do not let anyone who delights in false humility and the worship of angels disqualify you. Such a person also goes into great detail about what they have seen; they are puffed up with idle notions by their unspiritual mind. ¹⁹ They have lost connection with the head, from whom the whole body, supported and held together by its ligaments and sinews, grows as God causes it to grow.

²⁰ Since you died with Christ to the elemental spiritual forces of this world, why, as though you still belonged to the world, do you submit to its rules: ²¹ 'Do not handle! Do not taste! Do not touch!?' ²² These rules, which have to do with things that are all destined to perish with use, are based on merely human commands and teachings. ²³ Such regulations indeed have an appearance of wisdom, with their self-imposed worship, their false humility and their harsh treatment of the body, but they lack any value in restraining sensual indulgence.

Tuesday 4th January

Psalm 89:1-18

I will sing of the LORD's great love for ever; with my mouth I will make your faithfulness known through all generations.

**² I will declare that your love stands firm for ever,
that you have established your faithfulness in heaven itself.**

³ You said, 'I have made a covenant with my chosen one,
I have sworn to David my servant,

**⁴ "I will establish your line for ever
and make your throne firm through all generations."**

⁵ The heavens praise your wonders, LORD,
your faithfulness too, in the assembly of the holy ones.

**⁶ For who in the skies above can compare with the LORD?
Who is like the LORD among the heavenly beings?**

⁷ In the council of the holy ones God is greatly feared;
he is more awesome than all who surround him.

**⁸ Who is like you, LORD God Almighty?
You, LORD, are mighty, and your faithfulness surrounds you.**

⁹ You rule over the surging sea; when its waves mount up, you still them.

**¹⁰ You crushed Rahab like one of the slain;
with your strong arm you scattered your enemies.**

¹¹ The heavens are yours, and yours also the earth;
you founded the world and all that is in it.

**¹² You created the north and the south;
Tabor and Hermon sing for joy at your name.**

¹³ Your arm is endowed with power;
your hand is strong, your right hand exalted.

**¹⁴ Righteousness and justice are the foundation of your throne;
love and faithfulness go before you.**

¹⁵ Blessed are those who have learned to acclaim you,
who walk in the light of your presence, LORD.

¹⁶ **They rejoice in your name all day long;
they celebrate your righteousness.**

¹⁷ For you are their glory and strength,
and by your favour you exalt our horn.

¹⁸ **Indeed, our shield belongs to the LORD,
our king to the Holy One of Israel.**

Colossians 3:1-11

Living as those made alive in Christ

³ Since, then, you have been raised with Christ, set your hearts on things above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. ² Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things. ³ For you died, and your life is now hidden with Christ in God. ⁴ When Christ, who is your life, appears, then you also will appear with him in glory.

⁵ Put to death, therefore, whatever belongs to your earthly nature: sexual immorality, impurity, lust, evil desires and greed, which is idolatry. ⁶ Because of these, the wrath of God is coming. ⁷ You used to walk in these ways, in the life you once lived. ⁸ But now you must also rid yourselves of all such things as these: anger, rage, malice, slander, and filthy language from your lips. ⁹ Do not lie to each other, since you have taken off your old self with its practices ¹⁰ and have put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge in the image of its Creator. ¹¹ Here there is no Gentile or Jew, circumcised or uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave or free, but Christ is all, and is in all.

Wednesday 5th January

Psalm 48

Great is the LORD, and most worthy of praise,
in the city of our God, his holy mountain.

² **Beautiful in its loftiness, the joy of the whole earth, like the heights of
Zaphon is Mount Zion, the city of the Great King.**

³ God is in her citadels; he has shown himself to be her fortress.

⁴ **When the kings joined forces, when they advanced together,**

⁵ they saw her and were astounded; they fled in terror.

⁶ **Trembling seized them there, pain like that of a woman in labour.**

⁷ You destroyed them like ships of Tarshish shattered by an east wind.

⁸ **As we have heard, so we have seen in the city of the LORD Almighty,
in the city of our God: God makes her secure for ever.**

⁹ Within your temple, O God, we meditate on your unfailing love.

¹⁰ **Like your name, O God, your praise reaches to the ends of the earth;
your right hand is filled with righteousness.**

¹¹ Mount Zion rejoices, the villages of Judah are glad
because of your judgments.

¹² **Walk about Zion, go round her, count her towers,**

¹³ consider well her ramparts, view her citadels, that you may tell of them
to the next generation.

¹⁴ **For this God is our God for ever and ever;
he will be our guide even to the end.**

Colossians 3:12-4:1

¹² Therefore, as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience. ¹³ Bear with each other and forgive one another if any of you has a grievance against someone. Forgive as the Lord forgave you. ¹⁴ And over all these virtues put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity.

¹⁵ Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, since as members of one body you were called to peace. And be thankful. ¹⁶ Let the message of Christ dwell among you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom through psalms, hymns, and songs from the Spirit, singing to God with gratitude in your hearts. ¹⁷ And whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.

¹⁸ Wives, submit yourselves to your husbands, as is fitting in the Lord.

¹⁹ Husbands, love your wives and do not be harsh with them.

²⁰ Children, obey your parents in everything, for this pleases the Lord.

²¹ Fathers, ^[c] do not embitter your children, or they will become discouraged.

²² Slaves, obey your earthly masters in everything; and do it, not only when their eye is on you and to curry their favour, but with sincerity of heart and reverence for the Lord. ²³ Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for human masters, ²⁴ since you know that you will receive an inheritance from the Lord as a reward. It is the Lord Christ you are serving. ²⁵ Anyone who does wrong will be repaid for their wrongs, and there is no favouritism.

⁴ Masters, provide your slaves with what is right and fair, because you know that you also have a Master in heaven.

Thursday 6th January

Psalm 18:1-30

I love you, LORD, my strength.

² The LORD is my rock, my fortress and my deliverer; my God is my rock, in whom I take refuge, my shield and the horn of my salvation, my stronghold.

³ I called to the LORD, who is worthy of praise,
and I have been saved from my enemies.

**⁴ The cords of death entangled me;
the torrents of destruction overwhelmed me.**

⁵ The cords of the grave coiled around me; the snares of death confronted me.

⁶ In my distress I called to the LORD; I cried to my God for help.

From his temple he heard my voice; my cry came before him, into his ears.

⁷ The earth trembled and quaked, and the foundations of the mountains shook; they trembled because he was angry.

**⁸ Smoke rose from his nostrils; consuming fire came from his mouth,
burning coals blazed out of it.**

⁹ He parted the heavens and came down; dark clouds were under his feet.

¹⁰ He mounted the cherubim and flew; he soared on the wings of the wind.

¹¹ He made darkness his covering, his canopy around him –
the dark rain clouds of the sky.

**¹² Out of the brightness of his presence clouds advanced,
with hailstones and bolts of lightning.**

¹³ The LORD thundered from heaven;
the voice of the Most High resounded.

**¹⁴ He shot his arrows and scattered the enemy,
with great bolts of lightning he routed them.**

¹⁵ The valleys of the sea were exposed and the foundations of the earth laid bare at your rebuke, LORD, at the blast of breath from your nostrils.

**¹⁶ He reached down from on high and took hold of me;
he drew me out of deep waters.**

¹⁷ He rescued me from my powerful enemy,
from my foes, who were too strong for me.

**¹⁸ They confronted me in the day of my disaster,
but the LORD was my support.**

¹⁹ He brought me out into a spacious place;
he rescued me because he delighted in me.

**²⁰ The LORD has dealt with me according to my righteousness;
according to the cleanness of my hands he has rewarded me.**

²¹ For I have kept the ways of the LORD; I am not guilty of turning from my God.

²² All his laws are before me; I have not turned away from his decrees.

²³ I have been blameless before him and have kept myself from sin.

**²⁴ The LORD has rewarded me according to my righteousness,
according to the cleanness of my hands in his sight.**

²⁵ To the faithful you show yourself faithful,
to the blameless you show yourself blameless,

**²⁶ to the pure you show yourself pure,
but to the devious you show yourself shrewd.**

²⁷ You save the humble but bring low those whose eyes are haughty.

²⁸ You, LORD, keep my lamp burning; my God turns my darkness into light.

²⁹ With your help I can advance against a troop; with my God I can scale a wall.

**³⁰ As for God, his way is perfect: he LORD's word is flawless;
he shields all who take refuge in him.**

Colossians 4:2-end

² Devote yourselves to prayer, being watchful and thankful. ³ And pray for us, too, that God may open a door for our message, so that we may proclaim the mystery of Christ, for which I am in chains. ⁴ Pray that I may proclaim it clearly, as I should. ⁵ Be wise in the way you act towards outsiders; make the most of every opportunity. ⁶ Let your conversation be always full of grace, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how to answer everyone.

Final greetings

⁷ Tychicus will tell you all the news about me. He is a dear brother, a faithful minister and fellow servant in the Lord. ⁸ I am sending him to you for the express purpose that you may know about our circumstances and that he may encourage your hearts. ⁹ He is coming with Onesimus, our faithful and dear brother, who is one of you. They will tell you everything that is happening here.

¹⁰ My fellow prisoner Aristarchus sends you his greetings, as does Mark, the cousin of Barnabas. (You have received instructions about him; if he comes to you, welcome him.) ¹¹ Jesus, who is called Justus, also sends greetings. These are the only Jews among my fellow workers for the kingdom of God, and they have proved a comfort to me. ¹² Epaphras, who is one of you and a servant of Christ Jesus, sends greetings. He is always wrestling in prayer for you, that you may stand firm in all the will of God, mature and fully assured. ¹³ I vouch for him that he is working hard for you and for those at Laodicea and Hierapolis.

¹⁴ Our dear friend Luke, the doctor, and Demas send greetings. ¹⁵ Give my

greetings to the brothers and sisters at Laodicea, and to Nympha and the church in her house.

¹⁶ After this letter has been read to you, see that it is also read in the church of the Laodiceans and that you in turn read the letter from Laodicea.

¹⁷ Tell Archippus: 'See to it that you complete the ministry you have received in the Lord.'

¹⁸ I, Paul, write this greeting in my own hand. Remember my chains. Grace be with you.

Friday 7th January

Psalm 99

The LORD reigns, let the nations tremble; he sits enthroned between the cherubim, let the earth shake.

² Great is the LORD in Zion; he is exalted over all the nations.

³ Let them praise your great and awesome name –he is holy.

⁴ The King is mighty, he loves justice – you have established equity; in Jacob you have done what is just and right.

⁵ Exalt the LORD our God and worship at his footstool; he is holy.

⁶ Moses and Aaron were among his priests, Samuel was among those who called on his name; they called on the LORD and he answered them.

⁷ He spoke to them from the pillar of cloud;

they kept his statutes and the decrees he gave them.

⁸ LORD our God, you answered them; you were to Israel a forgiving God, though you punished their misdeeds.

⁹ Exalt the LORD our God and worship at his holy mountain, for the LORD our God is holy.

Matthew 20:1-16

The parable of the workers in the vineyard

²⁰ 'For the kingdom of heaven is like a landowner who went out early in the morning to hire workers for his vineyard. ² He agreed to pay them a denarius for the day and sent them into his vineyard.

³ 'About nine in the morning he went out and saw others standing in the market-place doing nothing. ⁴ He told them, "You also go and work in my vineyard, and I will pay you whatever is right." ⁵ So they went.

'He went out again about noon and about three in the afternoon and did the same thing. ⁶ About five in the afternoon he went out and found still others

standing around. He asked them, "Why have you been standing here all day long doing nothing?"

⁷ "Because no one has hired us," they answered.

'He said to them, "You also go and work in my vineyard."

⁸ 'When evening came, the owner of the vineyard said to his foreman, "Call the workers and pay them their wages, beginning with the last ones hired and going on to the first."

⁹ 'The workers who were hired about five in the afternoon came and each received a denarius. ¹⁰ So when those came who were hired first, they expected to receive more. But each one of them also received a denarius. ¹¹ When they received it, they began to grumble against the landowner. ¹² "These who were hired last worked only one hour," they said, "and you have made them equal to us who have borne the burden of the work and the heat of the day."

¹³ 'But he answered one of them, "I am not being unfair to you, friend. Didn't you agree to work for a denarius? ¹⁴ Take your pay and go. I want to give the one who was hired last the same as I gave you. ¹⁵ Don't I have the right to do what I want with my own money? Or are you envious because I am generous?"

¹⁶ 'So the last will be first, and the first will be last.'

Saturday 8th January

Psalm 46

God is our refuge and strength, an ever-present help in trouble.

² Therefore we will not fear, though the earth give way and the mountains fall into the heart of the sea,

³ though its waters roar and foam and the mountains quake with their surging.

⁴ There is a river whose streams make glad the city of God, the holy place where the Most High dwells.

⁵ God is within her, she will not fall; God will help her at break of day.

⁶ Nations are in uproar, kingdoms fall; he lifts his voice, the earth melts.

⁷ The LORD Almighty is with us; the God of Jacob is our fortress.

⁸ Come and see what the LORD has done, the desolations he has brought on the earth.

⁹ He makes wars cease to the ends of the earth. He breaks the bow and shatters the spear; he burns the shields with fire.

¹⁰ He says, 'Be still, and know that I am God; I will be exalted among the nations, I will be exalted in the earth.'

¹¹ The LORD Almighty is with us; the God of Jacob is our fortress.

Matthew 20:17-28

Jesus predicts his death a third time

¹⁷ Now Jesus was going up to Jerusalem. On the way, he took the Twelve aside and said to them, ¹⁸ ‘We are going up to Jerusalem, and the Son of Man will be delivered over to the chief priests and the teachers of the law. They will condemn him to death ¹⁹ and will hand him over to the Gentiles to be mocked and flogged and crucified. On the third day he will be raised to life!’

A mother's request

²⁰ Then the mother of Zebedee's sons came to Jesus with her sons and, kneeling down, asked a favour of him.

²¹ ‘What is it you want?’ he asked.

She said, ‘Grant that one of these two sons of mine may sit at your right and the other at your left in your kingdom.’

²² ‘You don't know what you are asking,’ Jesus said to them. ‘Can you drink the cup I am going to drink?’

‘We can,’ they answered.

²³ Jesus said to them, ‘You will indeed drink from my cup, but to sit at my right or left is not for me to grant. These places belong to those for whom they have been prepared by my Father.’

²⁴ When the ten heard about this, they were indignant with the two brothers.

²⁵ Jesus called them together and said, ‘You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their high officials exercise authority over them. ²⁶ Not so with you. Instead, whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, ²⁷ and whoever wants to be first must be your slave – ²⁸ just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.’