

connecting faith and daily life

Longing

Katharine Smith *reflects on* Isaiah 40:1-11 and Mark 1:1-8



Lord Jesus, you speak words of comfort to God's people. Help us to allow you to gather us into your arms, to carry us into new life and to fill our hearts with your joy, peace and love. Amen.

Finding God on the smallholding

by Jeni Parsons

Well the ram has gone home for another year and I can now go into the sheep field to check the ewes and trim their feet. Until now the field has been pretty much out of bounds for us, as being butted by a ram protecting his ewes can be rather uncomfortable.

So now we begin months of watching and waiting, which is so much like the Advent season. God and the unborn lambs are in our midst, we respond to the gradual change but until the day of birthing, but it's easy to forget that slow movement to newness.

Immanuel, God with us, is true all the time and in every season but it takes watching and waiting to really live it and know its truth in our lives.

Might it be taking the metaphor too far, to say that this world is pregnant with God? ☺

People from all over the country flock to the banks of the River Jordan to see and hear this mysterious man, John. Why are they attracted to him and his call for repentance?

Many, if not all, believe that John could be a prophet preparing the way for the longed-for Messiah. His words, clothes and way of life support this idea and if it's true then no one wants to miss the appearance in the wilderness of God's anointed one.

Perhaps many know in their own hearts a deep personal longing for a new and better way to live. They hang on in hope to Isaiah's words: "Comfort, O comfort my people... speak tenderly to Jerusalem... Here is your God!". In their bruised and damaged lives they too long for the care, guidance and gentleness of one who will gather them up, carry them and lead them gently into places of safety and refreshment.

We too might long for the coming of God's kingdom here on earth when the glory of the Lord shall be revealed and for the fulfilment of God's promise of forgiveness, tenderness and love in our lives. If so, let's allow these words from Isaiah to touch our hearts and bring us the comfort and peace of believing that "the word of our God will stand for ever". ☺

The Advent calendar

by Lisa Tulfer

Do you like surprises? The element of surprise is at the heart of the Advent calendar. As each day's window is opened to reveal a picture, a gift, or the ever-popular chocolate, part of the attraction is the not knowing what we are going to find.

As we journey through the season of Advent, it can be hard for us, who know the story so well, to hold on to that element

of surprise. As we re-tell the story of the birth of Jesus at Bethlehem (complete with stable, donkey, ox, ass, angels, shepherds, the star, the Magi and all the other familiar cast of characters), the risk is that it becomes over-familiar.

Let us take time, with each window we open on the Advent calendar, to marvel with fresh awe and wonder at the miracle of God's love at Christmas – God made incarnate, one of us, for our salvation. ☺

“Almighty God, give us grace to cast away the works of darkness and put on the armour of light, now in the time of this life, in which your Son Jesus Christ came to visit us in great humility.”

Book of Common Prayer, 1662