

Bermudian Church of the Brethren

WEDNESDAY'S WORD – a midweek thought from Pastor Larry M. Dentler
to share a word of inspiration ... encouragement ... challenge ... a smile ... in the middle of your week
December 5 in the year of our Lord 2018 - #767 First Week of Advent

NATIONAL DAY of MOURNING – Remembering with thanksgiving the life of President George H.W. Bush, and his witness for marriage, family, integrity, faith and service to our country.

THE HOPES AND FEARS OF ALL THE YEARS

Mary leaned back and caught her breath. The damp, musky smell of the stable filled her senses. Beside her Joseph now was sound asleep ... exhausted. Before her in His manger bed lay her Son. Cooing softly ... His eyes seemed to sparkle with the light of the universe. Like a million mothers before and since Mary counted the tiny toes and fingers of her Son. Perfect. She pondered all that had happened the last hours. No room. Baby coming. Stable. Birth. Joy. Shepherds. Quiet. Her mind raced back to the words of the angel nine months ago. *"He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give Him the throne of His father David, and He will reign over the house of Jacob forever; His Kingdom will never end."* (Luke 1:32, 33 NIV) Those words seem almost silly here in this stable filled with the pungent aroma of manure. But God has proven faithful every step so far of this journey and she had made a commitment to be *"the Lord's servant"* (Luke 1:38 NIV), so she looked into those sparkling eyes with a million questions of the future and absolute trust in God. She always imagined her firstborn would carry the name of his father, Joseph, or her own father Joachim, but the angel had made it very clear to her, and to Joseph in his amazing dream, what this Child's name should be. (see Luke 1:31 & Matthew 1:21) She leaned forward, bending low to kiss the baby's forehead and whispered, Jesus!

The hospital room was quiet, except for the quiet ticking of the machinery that was keeping him alive. She looked at her husband quietly lying there. Peaceful. The doctors said that it wouldn't be much longer. The children and grandchildren had been by. Tearful words of love and good-bye. She smiled at how his eyes danced with the grandbabies' attention. The Pastor had been by and prayed with them. A million thoughts filled her mind. How thankful she was for this man and their 63 years together. Once so strong and hardworking, now a frail skin covered skeleton. She held his bony hand. How would she face Christmas without him? How would she face life without him? She thought of the faith that they shared. Prayers together. Devotions together. Side-by-side in Church every Sunday. Hand-in-hand in ministry. Oh how faithful the Lord had been through difficult times and good. They shared so much ... but nothing more important than their faith in Christ. Now she knew, though the road would be difficult, that the Lord would be with her. And she knew without a shadow of doubt where her beloved husband would soon be. Not lost. She leaned in to kiss him on the forehead and whispered in her husband's ear, Jesus!

He sat at the kitchen table looking at the thin checkbook. How would he make the mortgage payment? How would he buy the groceries for his family? With the job cuts at the plant he was happy to have a job at all. But the reduced hourly rate barely provided for the young family's

needs. And now it is Christmas. There was no extra money for presents. Tears filled his eyes. Then he looked in at the rather shabby Christmas tree in the living room. It was surrounded by presents. A local Church, working with the school's guidance department, had provided these generous "Angel Tree" Gifts. A note with the presents wished the family well and expressed love in Christ. He had always been a man of faith, but to be honest hadn't been very faithful in recent years. In the quiet of that Christmas Eve with the family tucked in their beds awaiting Christmas morning that would be filled with joy because of these unknown Christians. He lowered himself humbly on to his knees, with folded hands and lifted eyes he whispered, Jesus....

The big truck purred like the proverbial kitten in the truck stop parking lot. He had been so sure that on this Christmas Eve he would be home on the other side of the country where he belonged with his family. But load arrangements and weather found him here ... alone. He had choked back tears as he had talked on the phone to his little girls and his wife. He tried to sound cheerful. *"I'll be home in just a couple days."* But now the night seemed so dark and lonely. The truck stop chaplain had been by. His words were comforting. His prayer a blessing. He had handed the big trucker a little bag. He opened it now to find homemade Christmas cookies. He smiled, and bit into a big chocolate cookie. He savored it. So good! He found a note in the bag. A Christian family, folks he would never know personally, wished him Merry Christmas and the love of Christ. He settled back in his truck's sleeper and thought of the hands that had prepared those cookies. God was with him ... he knew that. Soon he'd be home with family. He closed his eyes to pray in thanksgiving ... Jesus!

When Philadelphia pastor, Phillips Brooks, returned from his first trip to Israel he reflected on a very special night on Christmas Eve 1865 that he had spent in Bethlehem. He penned the words of one of our favorite Carols. He captures the mystery & wonder of what happened on that most Holy night. It was true then ... and is true today.

*"O Little town of Bethlehem, How still we see thee lie!
Above thy deep and dreamless sleep, The silent stars go by.
Yet in the dark streets shineth, The everlasting Light;
The hopes and fears of all the years, Are met in thee tonight"*

Dear ones, *"at the name of Jesus"* ... as you enjoy this Advent & Christmas season, know the Lord of Hope, the Christ of Christmas, is with you to calm your fears. He is with YOU! He loves YOU! He was born for YOU! He died and was resurrected for YOU for the forgiveness of YOUR sins! He intercedes for YOU today! And He is returning for YOU one day soon! And please keep your senses aware, there are folks around you who need a touch of love & hope to quiet their fears this special season.

Blessed Advent! Pastor Larry <><

"She will give birth to a Son, and you are to give Him the name Jesus, because He will save His people from their sins." Matthew 1:21 NIV