

Opening Letter
 by Mark Rudolph

To Know Christ and to Make Him Known

One of the most prominent sub-themes during Advent is that of “kingdom” and related terms. Jesus’ kingship, the kingdom of God, the soon-coming King, “the government will be upon his shoulders,” “the Prince of peace,” and many other such ideas dominate during the season.

The concepts above are the positive aspect of the “Advent equation.” The negative aspect of the equation is that the Prince of Peace arrived and we made war against him.



As John puts it, *he was in the world, and the world was made through Him, and the world did not know Him. He came to His own, and those who were His own did not receive Him* (John 1.10-11). Why didn’t 1st century Jews and Romans recognize the King? How is it that the creator’s “peasants” decided that it was OK to wage war on the King of Kings? Why couldn’t they listen – and why don’t we?

Think of the kingdom about which the Gospels speak as a foreign land, with it’s own language, culture, and rules. Part of the reason that Jesus experienced so much opposition, even from his own disciples, was and is because the

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Jesus of the Bible comes from a fundamentally and essentially different culture. The culture of the Kingdom of God is nothing like that of the

kingdom of this world.

If you have lived in another culture, you

know how hard it can be to understand that culture, never mind feel comfortable in it. Beside the obvious problems created by language barriers, other cultural cues are hard to detect and decipher. Things smell wrong, sound wrong, and taste wrong. People interact with each other in the wrong way, using the wrong gestures or symbols.

You probably also learned how easily one can look foolish in a foreign culture!



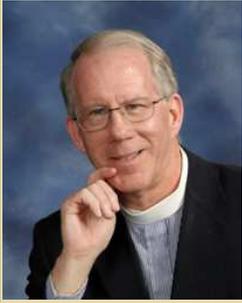
So here is a suggestion for an Advent discipline; choose one of the four Gospels and read that same Gospel through each week during Advent. If you have never done this before, I suggest either Luke or Mark, which per-

haps read most like a story. Or you could read Matthew (for some additional clarity regarding Old Testament connections) or John (for a perspective from heaven and eternity).

Believe me, this is not too burdensome a task. The longest of the books, Matthew, has 28 chapters. At five chapters a day, one can easily plow through Matthew each week and still take a day off! Don’t study the book either. Read it like a story, a novel, or better, like a biography or a travelog of a foreign land.

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Baker Library Book Brief
by Ken Cook

Due to the kindness of Betty Weir and her family, St. John's has recently received a treasure trove of volumes from Richard and Betty's personal library. These books include substantial Bible study reference works, biblical commentaries and focused studies on essential Christian truths. In this Book Brief, I intend to offer some perspective on three of these new gifts to your parish library. I will consider The Grace of Law: A Study in Puritan Theology by Ernest F. Kevan at some length, and then briefly comment on The Empty Cross of Jesus by Michael Green and For Heaven's Sake by Peter Kreeft. Kevan's work will prove to be very helpful to anyone who has struggled with the artificial distinction imposed upon biblical revelation by our culture (and as embraced uncritically by many within the Church of Christ) that the Lord of the Old Testament appears to be greatly different than the Savior shown forth in the New Testament. The way this error is most likely to be stated is either that "the God of the Old Testament is a God of wrath, while the God of the New Testament is a God of mercy" or that "the Old Testament is about law, while the New Testament is about grace." Both of these misunderstandings have ancient and deep heretical roots - look up "Marcion" (circa 144 AD) in the standard reference of your choice - and are based on superficial readings

of the Bible as popularized by the liberal theologies which arose in 19th Century Germany. To say the least, The Grace of Law is a masterful necessary corrective to much of the common misconception about the unity of the Bible's teaching which surrounds us.

For some Anglican readers, Kevan's subtitle will be automatically off-putting. This is due to another uncritical "hunch" that has been received as truth. We have been taught that Puritans and Anglicans of the 16th and 17th Centuries had nothing in common. But that is to assert far too much. Kevan goes to considerable lengths to document "the vast substratum of agreement which actually underlay the disagreement between Puritans and Anglicans" (p. 41) with regard to all matters pertaining to God's law, and many other doctrines. Among the many Puritan authors that Kevan gainfully cites are a goodly number of leading Anglican theologians of the period, including Richard Hooker, John Lightfoot, William Perkins, Bishop Edward Reynolds, and Archbishop James Ussher. Among the topics he considers by means of full chapters are "The Law of God for Man", "The Law and Sin", "The Place of Law in the Purpose of God", "The End of the Law", "The Continuance of Moral Obligation", "Christian Law-Keeping", and "Perfect Freedom". I especially recommend the reading of the first four chapters just referred to for a deepened grasp of the grace of God in all of his works. This volume is well-written and not particularly difficult to understand, but the subject matter is weighty throughout. What

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Mary, Did You Know?

Words and Music by Mark Lowry
and Buddy Greene

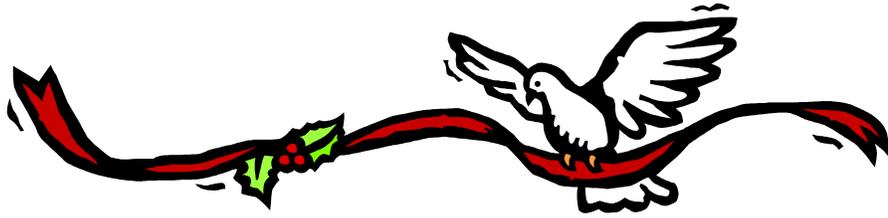
Mary, did you know that your baby boy would some day walk on water?
Mary, did you know that your baby boy would save our sons and daughters?
Did you know that your baby has come to make you new?
This child that you delivered will soon deliver you.
Mary, did you know that your baby boy will give sight to a blind man?
Mary, did you know that your baby boy will calm a storm with this hand?
Did you know that your baby boy has walked where angels trod?
When you kissed your little baby, then you kissed the face of God.
The blind will see, the deaf will hear, the dead will live again;
the lame will leap, the dumb will speak the praises of the Lamb.
Mary, did you know that your baby boy is Lord of all creation?
Mary, did you know that your baby boy will one day rule the nations?
Did you know that your baby boy was heaven's perfect Lamb?
This sleeping child you're holding is the great, the great "I AM!"



Submitted by Bill Kenney

Thank you

"The kingdom of heaven is like a grain of mustard seed that a man took and sowed in his field. It is the smallest of all seeds, but when it has grown it is larger than all the garden plants and becomes a tree, so that the birds of the air come and make nests in its branches." You have all sown into me in some way in my lifetime, whether recently or over the years. You may feel like it was a small seed, or you may have sacrificed significantly. Either way, God has fertilized those seeds, and now, my eyes and ears are blessed because they see and hear, like yours; and I have been blessed in my sowing. As I go out to sow in a new way, know that I am taking a part of you with me, which is the fruit of the seeds you have sown. Please pray that it in turn will bear more fruit. Love, Missy



Upcoming Holiday Events

Sunday, December 16th

Holy Communion at 8:00 am

Lessons & Carols at 9:30 am

Wassail, Fellowship & Outreach at 11:15 am

Caroling Party at Cook's in Abington at 7:30 pm

Saturday, December 22nd

Christmas Pageant at 5:00 pm

Sunday, December 23rd

Holy Communion at 8:00 am and 9:30 am

Monday, December 24th — Christmas Eve

Holy Communion at 10:00 pm

Tuesday, December 25th — Christmas Day

Holy Communion at 10:00 am



Lost and Found
by *Cindy Kamm*

Over these few months, we have had a lost key, a lost bible, a lost soul, and yesterday a lost dog named Champ. One has to wonder what "IT" is all about. IT being Advent, of course!

Linda from Jesus Focus Ministry first saw Champ during our walk. This older dog looked so sad and lonely. We tentatively approached Champ and noticed he had a tag which contained his name, telephone number and home address. Dare I say, it was an adventure! Champ let me pet and talk to him. Then, we managed to call the phone number on his tag. Linda managed to make up a temporary leash, and he of course led me around the parking lot. The lady who owned Champ called back upset as anyone would expect. She loaded her three small children into her van, and anxiously drove here to pick him up with a bag of groceries for the Pantry. This family was really happy their dog was found. It really warmed our hearts.

For me, Advent has always been about preparation for the birth of Jesus. And yes, that does mean baking, decorating and a little shopping. But more importantly, and now more than ever, IT'S about being found. Reaching out and finding the lost can be a

daunting endeavor. It can be even scary. Trust me. Our first thought when we saw Champ was the worry that he could bite us. However, something told us to take a chance. Take that chance; it is a rewarding experience. IT is (Advent is) a great time to build the Kingdom as preparation for the coming of Christ .

Yours in Christ,
Cindy



The Gospels are the "Constitution Of the Kingdom of God." If you want to know the King and his kingdom, the Gospels must be your bread and butter. You can't make Christ known, if you don't know Him well yourself!

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A handwritten signature in black ink that appears to read "Mark".

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else would we expect from some of the best English theologians from past centuries? Indeed, we take it for granted that it is necessary to *study* the Scriptures and their precise interpretation if we want to understand, apply and live a life of Christian holiness (see 2 Timothy 2:15). The Grace of Law has been in and out of print since its publication in 1946. I was only able to purchase my own paperback copy a year ago. This hardbound copy, autographed by the author (then Principal of London Bible College), was first studied by (the Rev.) Richard Weir when he was student at the College.

The Empty Cross of Jesus was written by the evangelist and scholar Michael Green when he was still the rector of St. Aldate's in Oxford. At present, he is still serving as a priest in an American congregation on the East Coast which has left the Episcopal Church. Most any Christian reader is likely to find this book to be difficult to put down. That might prove to be true for many non-Christians, as well. Green's book breaks down into three sections: "The Cross", "The Resurrection" and "The Empty Cross". If nothing else, read the short second chapter, "The Most Famous Death in History". The author says that "The cross is too im-

portant a matter to be left to the theologians." What do you think?

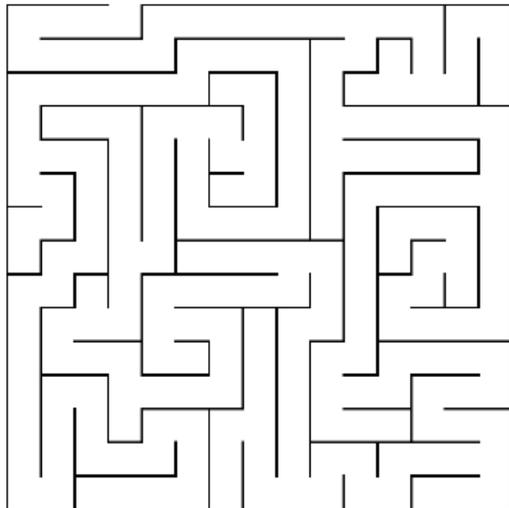
For Heaven's Sake is a reflective study of the classic Western and Christian virtues written by Peter Kreeft, long a professor of philosophy at Boston College and a defender of the Christian faith. Virtues have been understood as objective expressions of moral excellence which all members of society (and/or the Church of Christ) should intend to manifest in their lives. It ought to be noted that "virtues", by definition, differ from and are greater than the passing "values" which some elements of society might find appealing and want to model. This reader-friendly book offers a very helpful consideration of the Beatitudes (Matthew 5:1-12).

It is with gratitude that we receive these gifts, and we offer them - and ourselves - to Christ, "the inexpressible gift" of God (2 Corinthians 9:6-15)!





Help the shepherd find his way to the stable to see the Baby Jesus!



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Birth of Christ

DOWN

- 1 Who were tending their flocks by night
- 2 Who announced the birth of Christ to the shepherds
- 3 The wise men bowed down to Jesus to _____ him
- 4 Jesus was born in this town
- 6 "The _____ of peace" - one of the titles of Jesus
- 8 mother of Jesus
- 9 Jesus was born in a _____
- 10 The shepherds were in the _____ when they saw an angel

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ACROSS

- 1 The wise men followed a _____ that led them to Jesus
- 5 human father of Jesus
- 7 There was no _____ at the inn for Jesus
- 9 one of the gifts of the three wise men
- 11 Jesus could not stay at the _____ because it was full
- 12 and on earth _____, goodwill toward men (Luke 2:14)

More puzzles at: <http://biblewordgames.com>

