

St. Timothy's Banner

Christmas 2020



Jn. 1:12 ...to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God—

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ON COVENANT LOVE

By Do Fox

My child
I want you to see what I really mean by Covenant Love.
Right from the beginning
When I said that the two shall become one
I had humanity, and the Godhead in mind.
Yes, it referred to marriage
Between a man and a woman,
But this word pointed forward
To the time of My Son's conception.
He left Me, and entered into humanity
As a fully Divine, and fully human person.
This was My intent from the beginning!
He lived the oneness that I want for all My children.
This oneness brings about a transformation
That lifts you out of death
Into Eternal Life with Me. It is a marriage of My Spirit with yours
And makes My Kingdom visible
Both to yourself, and to those around you.
Like any marriage, it must be freely chosen
Because freedom is the air we breathe together,
All else is darkness and death.
My Son is the wedding ring that I slip on your finger, and on your heart.
If you choose this Covenant Love
You cannot belong to another.
I ask for all, but I give all!
Your eyes will become open
As you come to embrace and understand
The Eternal nature of My Covenant Love.



God, the Ultimate Shephard

By Rev. Dan Endresen

Before Jesus was born the situation of Mary and Joseph got worse before it got better. The wonderful fervor and excitement of angelic messages, dreams and prophecies to and through Mary and Joseph and Elizabeth was suddenly doused by news of a census, and the inconvenience of having to travel to Bethlehem from Nazareth very late term. Finding no vacancy in the inn when they arrived with the birth pains increasing must have been devastating. Babies don't wait. And imagine – this was Mary's first. Nevertheless, the child was born. He was wrapped and lain in a feeding trough for animals to keep him off the ground, probably while Mary rested, and Joseph gathered wood for a fire. Where was the divine in all that? Well, God's word **was** fulfilled. God's will **was** done. The Christ-child **was** born. But people, with no regard for God, had made God's will difficult for the young couple who were so willingly submitting to it – and God didn't intervene.

God was there all the while – carried in the womb of Mary – but you might say God was their burden, even after Mary delivered. And even though they had, and held, the words of the angel, dreams, and prophecies of the past along with the newborn baby king that the words spoke about – it still took a fresh word to reveal God's presence. It took a fresh word from an angel of the Lord to reveal God's glory to

those around them – first to shepherds who rejoiced and shared the word with others – Mary and Joseph being the first. In doing so they encouraged Mary and Joseph greatly in the midst of their trial.

God is always with those who submit to his will, but that doesn't mean his presence will always be known and experienced joyfully. His presence does not always make things easy. God's presence in this world is often a burden to those who carry it. It was that for the prophets of old and it is that for us today. Why? Because the people of this world generally do not recognise God their Creator and Saviour. The very God in whom they live and move and have their being is not recognised by them and that is a burden for us who do. This is the sad reality of which we are constantly reminded of wherever we go. A world of people who generally do not recognise or acknowledge God is our context and that can even obscure our view of God at times. Actually, if we are not careful to concentrate on God that **will** happen often.

I read Psalms every day. The two Psalms I read in my morning devotion both spoke of that. They spoke of the vital importance of having our hearts **fixed** on God because otherwise God gets squeezed out. When our hearts are not fixed on God and we are distracted by many things and much business in this world, and when the people we associate with don't recognise or acknowledge God it negatively effects our relationship with God. We forget even our own times of intimacy with him and his word to us before. We focus on surviving without God, not recognising God is with us. But God faithfully and graciously sends us reminders.

Shepherds watching sheep at night do not have too many distractions. What do they do? They watch their sheep. Actually, they watch the surroundings of their sheep for anything strange – especially predators which also means they do not sleep. But can you imagine the shock of these poor shepherds that night when suddenly an angel stood in front of them and the glory of the Lord shone around them?



Our Creator

By Do Fox

God had his reasons for sending his angel to those poor faithful shepherds. He always reveals his word to those who are faithfully fixed on him. And God chose to use those faithful shepherds, (who I'm sure knew the whereabouts of every manger in Bethlehem), to encourage Mary and Joseph. The blessed couple may have been very discouraged that night because things were not working out quite as they thought God would work them. They did have their baby. But nothing else. Where would they go? What would they do? Where would they sleep tomorrow? What was next for them?

The answer came from an unlikely source – shepherds. Imagine what it must have been like to see these shepherds approaching then? And then giving them the message that they had received: “Do not be afraid, for behold I bring you good tiding of great joy which will be to **all** people. For there is born to you this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord”. “Glory to God in the Highest, And on earth peace, goodwill toward men”. From there the shepherds left them, and woke up the town with that same wonderful news. “And all those who heard it marvelled at those things which were told them by the shepherds” (Luke 2:18). And I'm sure God's people worked out the details of what Mary and Joseph had been concerned about. This shows us the importance of being faithful like these shepherds – faithfully undistracted by this world so that we can be fixed on God and hear his message to us – a message in which we can then encourage those around us.

Shepherds want their sheep aware of their presence because that brings peace to otherwise nervous sheep. Peace is healthy. God is the ultimate Shepherd. He is always watching and he is always there to help us, but we must be aware of his presence in order to have peace in all situations. Sometimes he reminds us of it by his creation, his word, or even his angels. Sometime he reminds us of his presence and message by friends and sometimes even by strangers. When he does, be sure to encourage someone else with it. We all need to be encouraged often – especially now. “Do not be afraid, for behold I bring you good tiding of great joy which will be to all people. For there is born to you this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord”. “Glory to God in the Highest, And on earth peace, goodwill toward men”.

Stars were His playthings,
And yet He came here,
Did He feel crowded?
Did He know fear?

There in the stable
Those sounds, and those smells,
Welcomed His Kingship
Without any bells.

Soft were the faces
That looked down on Him
These were the people
He chose to be kin.

Yet Heaven exploded
With angels so bright!
They shocked the poor shepherds
Huddled there in the night!

A doorway was opened
And beckons us in,
A way was provided
That led out of sin.

All praise and all Glory
We owe to our King,
Who came to be with us,
And changed everything!





Divine Incarnation

By Rev. Dan Endresen

“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 his own did not receive him. But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, to those who believed in his name...” (John 1:10-12)

The angel Gabriel was sent by God with this message to Mary, “you will conceive in your womb and bring forth a Son, and shall call His name JESUS.”³² He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Highest.³³ And He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of His kingdom there will be no end.” Mary believed the message and sensed its immediacy, otherwise she would not have asked the question she did next, “How can this be, since I do not know a man”? To which the angel answered her, “the Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Highest overshadow you; therefore, also, that Holy One who is to be born will be called the Son of God” (Luke 1:35). In other words – “Mary, you will not need a man”. Though I am sure that Mary did not understand the implications of that, or of the incarnation, even in general, she did understand that this was to be a miracle of God. This story of Mary reveals the human and practical side of what was described theologically of the divine in the Gospel of John chapter one – the Word becoming flesh – or human. The incarnation. “...you will conceive in your womb and bring forth a Son, and shall call His name JESUS”.

The God side of incarnation is a deeper mystery. It was the first step necessary to reconcile man with God once that relationship was broken. One of the Church Fathers, Athanasius, described the mystery of incarnation in his creed, (one of the three our Church recognises, saying): “...it is necessary to everlasting salvation [to] believe rightly the Incarnation of our Lord Jesus Christ. For the right Faith is, that we believe and confess, that our Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, is God and Man; God, of the Substance of the Father, begotten before the worlds; and Man, of the

Substance of his Mother, born in the world; Perfect God and perfect Man, of a reasonable soul and human flesh subsisting; Equal to the Father, as touching his Godhead; and inferior to the Father, as touching his Manhood. Who, although he be God and Man, yet he is not two, but one Christ; One, not by conversion of the Godhead into flesh, but by taking of the Manhood into God...”. That last phrase is quite exceptional. I’ll repeat it again. “One, not by conversion of the Godhead into flesh, but by taking of the Manhood into God”. Why do I say its exceptional? Because it goes deeper than what Christians basically understand, from the human perspective, of Mary as conceiving God. It is rather God subsuming the DNA of Mary. If God (as the Word) was complete before being conceived in Mary (and he was) it has to be that way. All that was merged in conception was subsumed – not as completing but the subsuming of human qualities and its limiting factors. It was not mortality that was added – for Jesus was still immortal – but the tangible limitations of humanity – for our sake – so that we could commune once again with God who was otherwise transcendent. Athanasius went as far as saying, “God became man that man might become God”. And its because of this the incarnation of God is, in my mind, the biggest of all miracles. Yes, we can think of the grand miracle of creation in the beginning – God creating us and everything else from nothing – but God is God after all, and that’s what God does. Everything that God did before the incarnation was supernatural. That’s his nature. And we can think of the miracles after the incarnation as well, like the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead and his ascension to heaven – but again, he was already God before becoming man, so as Peter said in Acts 2:24, “...it was not possible that he should be held by [death]. The incarnation of God on the other hand is different. It is God becoming something that is unlike God in becoming a material being as well. It is the transcendent Creator uniting with his creation – and a fallen creation at that – God becoming a human too.

The very word “transcendent”, when speaking of God, means existing apart from, and not subject to, the limitations of the material universe. But the one who was transcendent willingly became, reachable, touchable, even abusable, by fellow humans, though we cannot go as far as saying common. We can say, as the Apostle Paul did in Philippians 2:7-8, that God in the incarnation “made himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant, *and* coming in the likeness of men.”⁸ And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to *the point of death*, even the death of the cross”. All this long after he had created part of what would become his material self [or body] way back in the very beginning when he created Adam. And all of this **after** sin entered Adam, and through Adam, man – when distrust of the God, and then rebellion against his will and command was acted upon. Why, after that, would the Creator desire again to unite with his rebellious creation? Why, after it was fallen?

I think we can get a hint from Proverbs which is about wisdom personified. Jesus is wisdom personified. Listen [again] to the words of Proverbs 8:29-36 with God the Father and Jesus, the Son, in mind. “When He marked out the foundations of the earth,³⁰ Then I was beside Him *as* a master craftsman; And I was daily *His* delight, Rejoicing always before Him,³¹ Rejoicing in His inhabited world, And my delight *was* with the sons of men” (Proverbs 8: 29-31). Can you imagine the one rejoicing as the pre-incarnate Jesus? Can you imagine us as his delight? Would he not want to rectify the problem of the ones he delighted in? He did. That’s why he came. 1 Corinthians 1:30 says this of Christians who believe he did so, “But of Him you are in Christ Jesus, who became for us wisdom from God – and righteousness and sanctification and redemption” (1 Cor. 1:30).

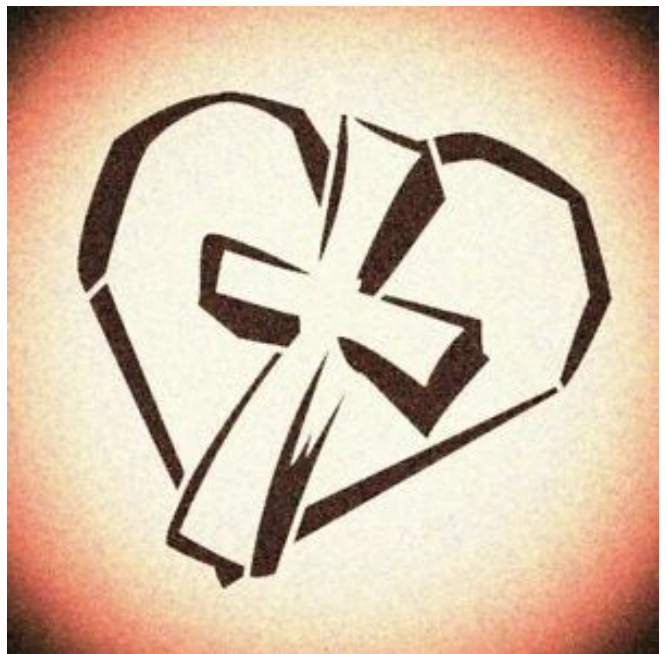
Though man was made in the image and likeness of God – especially in regards to free-will, man was not one with God. Man had a will independent of God. And it seems, by the choice he made, that man lacked wisdom. Instead of eating of the tree of life, man chose to eat from the tree of knowledge of good and evil against God’s will and commandment which broke communion with God – man’s life

source. As Jesus said, quoting Moses, “It is written, man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word of God (Luke 4:4).

Broken communion with God is a terminal problem that cannot be remedied by man. Only God can fix it. That’s what he did. Jesus stepped in because he loved us. Jesus delighted in us so much that he came to us, became one of us, and even died for us, in the Father’s will, to save us, making provision for us to eat from the tree of life – which is him and commune with the Father. The divine incarnation is the greatest of miracles, not due so much to the supernatural miracle of a virgin conceiving a child as much as it is the transcendent God becoming human too, in order to make right what we did wrong. It gives every individual – with the benefit of hindsight of the harm that’s been done by our individuality – a second chance. It is God’s second chance of a loving relationship presented to you through Jesus Christ. Do you realise what a gift that is?

Oswald Chambers wrote, “The whole meaning of the incarnation is the cross. Beware of separating God manifest in the flesh from the Son becoming sin. The incarnation was for the purpose of Redemption. God became incarnate for the purpose of putting away sin...”

“For our sake, he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God” (2 Corinthians 5:21). Believe it. Receive Him. Believe on His name – Jesus – God saves!





MERRY CHRISTMAS

By Suzanne Weagle

I enjoy Christmas. It is a blessing to put up the tree, and cover it in lights, especially at this time of year, when it is night again before the day's work is done.

This year, Christmas will be "different", very different, for families, for those alone, for those in long term care.

This "season" we find ourselves in, with this unwelcome visitor, Covid, is a motivator for me, to spend more time with our Lord Jesus.

Our God, is Omnipotent, Omniscient and Omnipresent, all seeing, all knowing and all powerful, so we know He is well aware of the circumstances in this earth.

As Christians, our celebrations focus on the birth of Jesus and some of the events leading up to His coming into this world.

Lately, some part of the Scriptures, that seem unrelated to His coming have arisen in me. I recognize those Scriptures as speaking of a time such as we find ourselves in.

Psalms 46, which none of us would even remotely associate with Christmas, has risen to the surface of my mind, my soul.

Ps. 46: 10... BE STILL, AND KNOW THAT I AM GOD: I WILL BE EXALTED AMONG THE HEATHEN, I WILL BE EXALTED IN THE EARTH.

Unless we bury our head in the sand, there is a rising cacophony of voices flooding the airwaves, visual scenes and pictures bombarding our eyes, fear, intimidation looming around us, but GOD'S WORD declares.

Verse 1...GOD is our REFUGE and STRENGTH, a very present HELP in time of trouble

Ps. 46 : 2-6 describe days of turmoil, mountains shaking, waters roaring and being troubled, and yet....we are instructed NOT TO FEAR.

Verse 7... THE LORD OF HOSTS IS WITH US; the GOD of JACOB is our REFUGE.

It was into days such as these that our SAVIOUR was born, an Angel of the Lord appearing to the shepherds to tell them of HIS birth, saying FEAR NOT, I bring you GOOD NEWS ...of great JOY....

So many things arose, before and after HIS Birth to try to take HIS LIFE. Mary and JOSEPH had to flee to EGYPT.

Many young children were slaughtered in HEROD's attempt to destroy this potential rival King.

But HIS coming was and still is GOOD NEWS of GREAT JOY..

Even better, is the GOOD NEWS that HE IS COMING AGAIN, NOT as a Babe in a manger, BUT AS THE KING OF KINGS and THE LORD OF LORDS.

In the celebration of HIS BIRTH, take time to BE STILL and KNOW, be reminded, think on, in these trying times, that HE IS GOD, OUR GOD, the HOLY ONE who has drawn close to us in the PERSON OF HIS SON that WE MIGHT KNOW HIM.

SHOE BOXES

By Bob Sumner

Our congregation filled and gave 25 shoe boxes this year. Not as good as last year, then this was a mixed up time.

Thank you all for the gifts to some kids who need some joy in their lives.

Boxes went to Costa Rica, El Salvador, Nicaragua, Guinea, Guinea Bissau, Sierra Leone, Senegal and Gambia.

CHRISTMAS

At Christmas, we celebrate the birth of a Jewish child, who 33 years later was executed by the Roman and Jewish establishments. Why then do we celebrate the child's birth? It makes no sense. He did not establish an empire. He did not become rich. He was not a rock star. He did not succeed, or did he?



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Man is estranged from his creator God, his environment and his fellow man, even within our own families. The world is headed for self-destruction and man can do nothing about it. Man has tried all sorts of solutions - religion, religious wars, empire, humanism, war to end all wars, world peace, United Nations, Club of Rome, globalization, climate change, and a one world government is being proposed. Nothing works and nothing will work. Man just cannot save himself no matter how hard we try.

The Christmas child, Jesus, shows us that the most important thing in life is to be reconciled to God our creator, nothing else matters. The world will end, and man will die. No one escapes suffering or death or judgement. But one can have peace in all circumstances in this life, and even in death - peace with God.

Jesus the Christ, the Messiah, has not only shown us the way, He can give us a second chance, a new life, if we accept Him. His Holy Spirit will guide us and help us to navigate the new life that He gives, and He is at the right hand of God, the Father in heaven, advocating for us.

May you receive the true gift of Christmas - the gift of life and peace with God, this Christmas. Have a very wonderful and merry Christmas.

Submitted By Harn Yawngwe



My Favorite Scripture Verse

Deacon Alan Arnold



“For God loved *Alan* in this way: He gave His One and Only Son, so that *if Alan* believes in Him, *Alan* will not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send His Son into the world that He might condemn *Alan*, but that *Alan* might be saved through Him. *If Alan* believes in Him, *he* is not condemned, but *if Alan* does not believe *he* is already condemned, because he has not believed in the name of the One and Only Son of God.

This, then, is the judgment: The light has come into the world, and *Alan* loved darkness rather than the light because *my* deeds were evil. For everyone who practices wicked things hates the light and avoids it, so that his deeds may not be exposed. But anyone who lives by the truth comes to the light, **so that his works may be shown to be accomplished by God.**”

Now I can hear you all shouting out to me, “But Deacon Alan, that is not in the Bible”. Let me explain the background to the changes to those beautiful verses in the 3rd chapter of John.

For thirty years, if I don’t count 10 years of childhood, I had been in denial of God’s very existence. Let me be clear, not only did I not believe in Him, but I denied in body, soul and mind His very existence at every opportunity. As for Jesus, what I picked up was a good moral code to live by from this Jewish teacher who some called the Son of God. But if God didn’t exist, then Jesus could be no more than another man.

Then for two years, covered in prayer (although I didn’t know it at the time) I read the Bible starting at Genesis 1:1, at first ‘foofooing’ everything I read. Then I started over again, this time reading all the study notes (have I mentioned it was a BIG NIV Study Bible I was using?). I should say devouring the scriptures and the notes at every opportunity, doing cross-references. The difference was this time the Holy Spirit had taken the blinders of my eyes, my mind and my heart. In the journey through the Old Testament through to Isaiah 53, He showed me the Truth

of His existence. I looked at nature around with new eyes, seeing His wonderful creation and its intricate design that begged for a designer and creator. I saw the love, expressed in blessing and discipline, God had for His chosen people Israel. I saw the lives of those who placed their faith in Him and wished the same for me.

Then we (the Holy Spirit leading) jumped from Isaiah 53 to Matthew 1:1. As I read the first 3 Gospels in the same NIV Study Bible the Holy Spirit revealed the true Christ Jesus. And the desire to know God was ever stronger, but how. I read John 3:16 but “the world” was such a big concept. There was still the doubt that I could be included. Hadn’t I denied Him for most of my life? Wasn’t that the BIG sin for which there could be no forgiveness?

Then Rev. Jim Bennett preached on those John 3 verses and said if anyone didn’t yet know Christ as Saviour, put your name in there. The bell rang. Hadn’t the Holy Spirit dragged an, at first, reluctant non-believer, for over 2 years, showing me the Truth of the True Light **“so that his works may be shown to be accomplished by God.”** He had chosen me, to pull me up out of the mire of darkness. Just like Israel, I could rely on His Promises. THE PROMISE OF 3:16 DID APPLY TO ME!!!!!!

That was the final nail in the coffin of my old life style. While the congregation was having communion, I was on my knees, asking for forgiveness of my new Saviour and giving my body, soul, mind and heart to the new Lord of my Life.

So that is the story of my favourite Bible verses. If anyone reading this, still does not know Christ Jesus as Lord, read God’s Word praying for the Holy Spirit to open the Scriptures (it doesn’t have to be a BIG study Bible) to show the Way, so you too can say, “For God loved _____ in this way: He gave His One and Only Son,.....”

If a reader has a loved one, family member, friend or colleague who doesn't know Christ, gather a prayer group and cover them in prayer constantly, letting the group know the progress so the prayers can be specific.

If the Holy Spirit is using you to lead someone to Christ, don't hesitate to ask them to personalize John 3:16 when He prompts you.

“For God loved the world in this way: He gave His One and Only Son, so that everyone who believes in Him will not perish but have eternal life. ¹⁷ For God did not send His Son into the world that He might condemn the world, but that the world might be saved through Him. ¹⁸ Anyone who believes in Him is not condemned, but anyone who does not believe is already condemned, because he has not believed in the name of the One and Only Son of God.

¹⁹ “This, then, is the judgment: The light has come into the world, and people loved darkness rather than the light because their deeds were evil. ²⁰ For everyone who practices wicked things hates the light and avoids it, so that his deeds may not be exposed. ²¹ But anyone who lives by the truth comes to the light, so that his works may be shown to be accomplished by God.”

John 3:16–21 (HCSB)



By Helen Yawng hwe

Here is my submission: a reminder that even in the worst times of trouble and sorrow, God's love and care for us is constant. We can rely on Him.

**The steadfast love of the LORD never ceases,
His mercies never come to an end; they are new
every morning;
great is Thy faithfulness.**

Lamentations 3:22-23



By Harn Yawng hwe

Matthew 28:18-20 - Jesus said to them, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, to the close of the age.”

These verses tell me all I need to know - about the Lord Jesus Christ, who he is, and what he wants me to do; and provide his assurance that he is not sending us out alone but that he is with us forever. The only question is, do I believe him and do what he has commanded whatever the consequences may be, or do I think I know better than the Lord of the Universe and disobey - hedge my bets and follow my own desires and do it my own way?

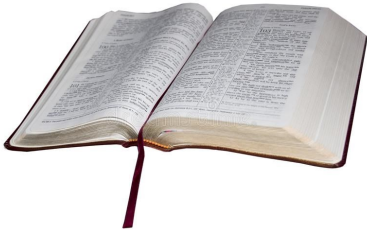


By Do Fox

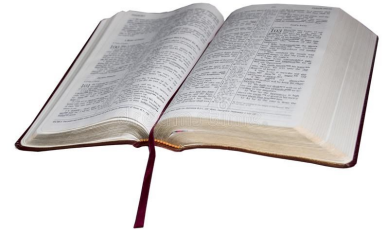
My favourite scripture verse is **1 John 4:16b. “God is love. Whoever lives in love lives in God, and God in him.”**

These words are so comforting to me. They show me the essence of God, of how to be close to Him, of how to obey Him, and of how to live, period. Love is so essential, so basic to life, as, I believe God is essential to life. Did He not create the universe? These are words that anyone, of any religion, can relate to. They clearly show the difference between good and evil. For me, they are like the air I breath, ie. life giving, energy giving, and have the solidity of truth behind them,. There are many words in scripture that I love, but these words are easiest for me to understand. They warm my heart and inspire me to try to love, with God's great Heart of Love.

p.s. I just want everyone to know God our Father's Love, tenderness, and patience, Jesus , our saviour's generous provision, and the Holy Spirit's wise guidance in their lives.



Favourite Bible Verses Continued



By Maria Oravcova

Galatians 2:20 – In spite of growing up in atheist Czechoslovakia with its strong agenda to eradicate any belief in God, I drank the gospel in, so to speak, with my mother’s milk. My parents and grandparents on both sides were born-again Christians so I knew the reality of us, as a human race, being separated from God by Adam’s sin and the only way back to him is by faith in the death of Jesus Christ on the cross for our sins and his resurrection. I believed and received the gift of salvation, becoming a daughter of God. I’ve never had any profound sense of guilt for my sins because I lived a pretty proper life from a human point of view. Maturing in the light of God’s word, and growing closer to Him, I was increasingly aware of my utter selfishness and of seeing there is nothing good in me apart from God, a “miserable offender” as our liturgy puts it. On the other hand my desire to please God and to glorify Him with my life grew stronger and stronger. I was coming to recognize this vast divide between my desire for a holy life and my inability to live it. In my struggle to resolve this conflict verse 20 in Galatians 2 stood out to me: **“I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I live in the body I live by faith in the Son who loved me and gave himself for me”**. It dawned on me that the only way for me to live a victorious life is to get out of way and let Jesus live in me. Not trying to be holy like God, but letting the Holy God live in me. It is not about me. It is all about Jesus. How do you do it? This verse says it is done through crucifixion and by faith in Jesus. What follows may not be theologically correct but I understand that being crucified means giving consent to the Lord to do what is necessary in order that I decrease so He may increase. (see also 2. Cor. 4:10). It could be as dramatic as life’s difficult circumstances, i.e., unfulfilled dreams, disappointments caused by closed doors, sickness, or anything that makes you feel like you’re dying, or simply as daily saying: Not

my will, Lord, but yours – not rebelling against his will but walking in it hidden in Christ. You might say: “it is not pleasant; it is completely against my flesh nature”. Exactly – crucifixion never is. That’s why we need faith in the Son to do it. The NIV translation says it is faith **in** the Son of God. A.B. Simpson in his work, *Himself* writes, “by the faith **of** the Son of God ...It is not **your** faith or **my** faith. We have **no** faith in ourselves, any more than we have life or anything else in ourselves...We must be open and ready to let Him do it all. We must take His faith as well as His life...”. We need the gift of faith that comes from Jesus. Our faith can fluctuate with circumstances or emotions. We can have faith in something that is not true. I experienced propaganda. If you hear the same message every day and everyone speaks the same message (because they are afraid to speak otherwise), you begin to believe the message. The only true faith is from heaven.

The end of **Galatians 2:20** is the highlight of it all. **“... the Son of God who loved me and gave himself for me”**. The theme of unconditional and sacrificial love has inspired fairy tales, novels, movies, songs from the beginning of history. I remember as a little girl I loved to read the stories about a handsome prince who left his kingdom and on his journey he finds this poor maiden who is somehow imprisoned by a scary dragon. The prince falls in love with her and by risking his own life he kills the dragon cutting his fire-spitting heads and rescues his beloved, taking her back to his kingdom where he marries her. Jesus left heaven and His kingdom for me. He gave His life to overcome the dragon, Satan, who had kept me in bondage. Jesus did it so I could be free and His own. He did it because He loved me. I believe it is a process. It is a life journey to completely decrease so that there is only Christ in me. I imagine it will be done the day I die and go to heaven because the work of Christ will be finished in me.



By Lois De Jean



In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven.

Matthew 5: 16 (ESV)

This year many people put up their outdoor Christmas lights early. It was as if there was a movement to bring light into this dark world, besieged by the COVID-19 virus. It also seems like more people than usual have festooned their properties with lights.

One of my favourite authors is Agatha Christie. I recently reread her last novel, *Passenger to Frankfurt*. She describes a world fraught with strife with young people demonstrating against the old order. The demonstrators are being manipulated by forces—big money, scientists, arms dealers, etc.

Anarchy, which the demonstrators are embracing, will ultimately lead to totalitarianism. The “solution” proposed is the production of a gas, which will make people benevolent. This process is irreversible. Of course, this may lead to unanticipated, unintended, and perhaps, disastrous, consequences.

We Christians are given the real answer. “...thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself.” BCP 1962 How hard is that? **HARD!**

Pastor Rick Warren has said, “Feelings are not facts.” One may not feel like caring for others, but we are commanded to do so.

Lord, please help me to love my neighbor, even when I do not feel like doing so. **AMEN**



By Gillian Lindsay

Psalm 36: 5 - 9 Eugene Peterson translation

God's love is meteoric, his loyalty astronomic, His purpose titanic, his verdicts oceanic. Yet in his largeness nothing gets lost; Not a man, not a mouse, slips through the cracks.

How exquisite your love, O God! How eager we are to run under your wings, To eat our fill at the banquet you spread as you fill our tankards with Eden spring water. You're a fountain of cascading light, and you open our eyes to light.

I like it because of the "word picture" way of describing God's greatness and love for us.

Mt. 11:29 Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls.

LEARN FROM ME

By Do Fox

To learn from Me
You must allocate the first place
In your heart, to Me
Otherwise, you will not hear me.
This is the first big step
Into becoming like Me.
As I come alive
In your heart, and mind,
You begin to see the great plan
That My Father has for you.
This is the yoke I speak of.
As you see this plan
You will feel the pulse of Life
Enter into you.
The Life of God is gentle and humble,
So different from the striving
Of the flesh that you are used to.
A humble heart is teachable,
And I have so much to share with you.
In the peace I have to give you
Lies the secret of the Love of God.
This love conquers evil
Of every kind.
You become my steadfast emissaries,
And, as I make the Father visible,
So shall you, if you will only
Learn from Me.





Bible Translation 1

By Harn Yawnghwe

Since becoming a Christian, I have always been interested in translating the Bible into Shan, my mother tongue. American Baptist missionary Reverend Josiah Nelson Cushing translated the Bible into the Shan language in 1899 (121 years ago). He did a great job but in his days the Shan script did not mark the tones. The Shan language has five tones, so unless one knew what was being said, or at least knew the context and could guess at the meaning, it was almost impossible to decipher the message.

In the Shan language, *goan* (tone 1) means *trousers* or *pants*; the same word, *goan* (tone 2) means to *cave-in*; (tone 3) means *buttocks*; (tone 4) means *man*; and (tone 5) means to *ache*. There is a funny story amongst Shan Christians. A new Christian was asked to read Ephesians 4:22-24 aloud: *That ye put off concerning the former conversation the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts; And be renewed in the spirit of your mind; And that ye put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness* (KJV). Unfortunately, he read – *put off... the old trousers, ...put on the new trousers*. He could not logically comprehend how one would put off or put on a man (old or new)

I wanted to add tones to the Cushing Bible and correct some of the grammar, etc. That was more than forty years ago but I got sidetracked. How that happened is another story. In any case, another version of the Shan Bible with tones was published in the 1990s. the Overseas Missionary Fellowship and the Shan Church in Myanmar are updating the Cushing Bible with tones. So, there is not much of a reason anymore for me to translate the Bible. But I thought I would try to do it anyway for my own edification.

I recently came across some examples that encouraged me to continue. One was Genesis 7:1. I am sure you remember the account of Noah and the Ark from Sunday School. Have you ever wondered how Noah might have felt when God told him to build a strange structure of gi-

gantic proportions? And later, when he was told to enter the vessel with all these animals, what was he thinking? Have you been near a tiger, or an elephant, or a polar or grizzly bear, even a moose? Even a tamer one in a zoo? Would you enter a building where these animals gathered? They were not cuddly pets. By Noah's time, man had been on earth after the Fall for nearly two thousand years and animals were already eating meat. How would he feed and care for them? Not only that, how did he know that the Ark would float and how was he going to survive in that, and for how long? I am sure it was all a bit terrifying for him.

The incredible thing is that God did not tell Noah to go into the Ark. Yet 36 of the 51 (71%) English translations on Bible Gateway.com say that God told Noah to do so. The Hebrew word actually used is *bo* which means come in. God said to Noah, *Come into the Ark*, which would make all the difference.

Did the other translators make a mistake? Not really. *Bo* can also mean *go* in some cases. As a translator, one has to make a judgement call. What is the probability – like the new Shan Christian, what is more likely, changing one's trousers or one's nature. He made the call but got it wrong. The Bible is sometimes like that. It makes no worldly sense. Translating is not an easy job but translating the Bible is even more difficult and interesting. One has to depend on the Holy Spirit, not just one's knowledge.

What this discovery taught me was that Noah was not embarking alone on a dangerous journey on an untested vessel full of strange passengers. God was making the journey with him. Gen 6:9 tells us that Noah walked with God like Enoch did (Gen 5:24), so he would have known. It reminds me of our Lord Jesus Christ saying to his disciples, *I am with you always, even unto the end of the world* (Mt 28:20). What an encouragement and what a reassurance and what a great and loving God we have!

BIBLE TRANSLATION 2

By Harn Yawnghwe

After becoming a Christian and getting married, I decided to try my hand at translating the Bible into Shan, my mother tongue. But I knew nothing about linguistics and translation techniques. I had been trained as an engineer and a financial analyst. I worked with numbers not with words. However, I had the natural advantage of growing up with three languages. At home, my father insisted that we spoke only in Shan. At school founded by Western missionaries, we could only speak in English or pay a fine. And last, but not least, we lived in Yangon, the capital of Burma (now Myanmar). To get along outside the home and school, one had to be able to at least function in the Burmese language. Then the military seized power in Burma and I had to run away to Thailand. Although Thai and Shan are basically the same language, they use a different script, so I had to learn a whole new writing system. The sentence structure of Shan is similar to English rather than Burmese although Shan and Burmese are Asian languages from the same country and look similar while English is European and looks different. Grammatically, Burmese syntax is like Japanese where the verb is at the end. God really mixed up the languages at Babel.

	Shan	Burmese	English	Thai
Sentence structure	I RIDE HORSE	I HORSE RIDE	I RIDE (A) HORSE	I RIDE HORSE
Written script	၂၀၅၂,မ	၂၀၅၂:မ	I ride a horse	ฉันขี่ม้า
Pronunciation	Gao-khee-ma	Nga-myin-see	I ride (a) horse	Chan-khee-ma

I found out that Bible Societies are organized by countries. So, a Shan translation would be handled by the Bible Society of Burma. That Bible Society would train a native speaker like myself to do the job. But since I was now in Canada, there was no way that could happen. Then I was told that Wycliffe Bible Translators trained non-native speakers to do the job. Again, I did not quite fit the bill. I already knew the language but I had no linguistic training. In any case, I was invited to observe/attend Bible translation workshops conducted by the Summer Institute of Linguistics (SIL) in Langley, British Columbia, and in Kitchener, Ontario. Translating can be tricky, not because of the source text but because of the language one is translating into. For example, in Gen 9:22, Ham told his two brothers outside the tent about their father. It is simple enough in English. But in Shan, it is a dilemma. One cannot say 'brother', one has to say older or younger brother. So what is the birth order of Shem, Ham, and Japheth? Most translations refer to Ham as Noah's youngest son (41 out of 50 or 82% of the English translations on Bible Gateway.com) based on Genesis 9:24. But elsewhere in Genesis 5, 6, 7, 9 and 10, Shem, Ham and Japheth are listed as Noah's sons in that order. However, Genesis 10, lists the families of Japheth, and Ham first before listing Shem's. To complicate matters, Genesis 10:21 talks about Shem in various translations as either being the brother of Japheth, the elder; or the elder brother of Japheth; or the younger brother of Japheth. So, who is the youngest and who is the oldest? Scholars argue that Japheth might be the eldest but Shem is listed first because he is the son of blessing. While that may explain Shem and Japheth, why is Ham always mentioned in between the two of them if he is the youngest? The answer may lie in the Hebrew word used – qatan. It can mean young, lesser or least. Genesis 9:24 may not be referring to Ham as Noah's youngest son but Noah's young son, as used in Genesis 4:23 – a young man. This would then explain why Ham is always in the middle. He is the middle son. While I would not be dogmatic about Ham being the middle son, this illustrates how translating a simple word, 'brother', can become quite complicated. One Shan translator translated 'brothers' as 'relatives'. I said older and younger brothers. It's a choice.



Humour



You'll love this one.

A 1st grade school teacher had twenty-six in her class. She presented each child in her classroom the 1st half of a well-known proverb and asked them to come up with the remainder of the proverb. It's hard to believe these were actually done by first graders. Their insight may surprise you. While reading, keep in mind that these are first-graders, 6-year-olds, because the last one is a classic!

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|--|--------------------------------|
| 1. Don't change horses | until they stop running. |
| 2. Strike while the | bug is close. |
| 3. It's always darkest before | Daylight Saving Time. |
| 4. Never underestimate the power of | termites. |
| 5. You can lead a horse to water but | How? |
| 6. Don't bite the hand that | looks dirty. |
| 7. No news is | impossible. |
| 8. A miss is as good as a | Mr. |
| 9. You can't teach an old dog new | math. |
| 10. If you lie down with dogs, you'll | stink in the morning. |
| 11. Love all, trust | me. |
| 12. The pen is mightier than the | pigs. |
| 13. An idle mind is | the best way to relax. |
| 14. Where there's smoke there's | pollution. |
| 15. Happy the bride who | gets all the presents. |
| 16. A penny saved is | not much. |
| 17. Two's company, three's | the Musketeers. |
| 18. Don't put off till tomorrow what | you put on to go to bed. |
| 10. Laugh and the whole world laughs | |
| with you, cry and | you have to blow your nose. |
| 20. There is none so blind as | Stevie Wonder. |
| 21. Children should be seen and not | spanked or grounded. |
| 22. If at first you don't succeed | get new batteries. |
| 23. You get out of something only what you | see in the picture on the box. |
| 24. When the blind lead the blind | get out of the way. |
| 25. A bird in the hand | is going to poop on you. |
| 26. Better late than | pregnant. |

Submitted by Bob Sumner



Joy to the World



ADVENT
ANGEL
BETHLEHEM
BIRTH
BLESSINGS
CAMELS
FRANKINCENSE

INFANT
JESUS
JOSEPH
MAGI
MANGER
MARY
MIRACLE

MYRRH
NATIVITY
REJOICE
STABLE
STAR
THREE KINGS
WISE MEN

