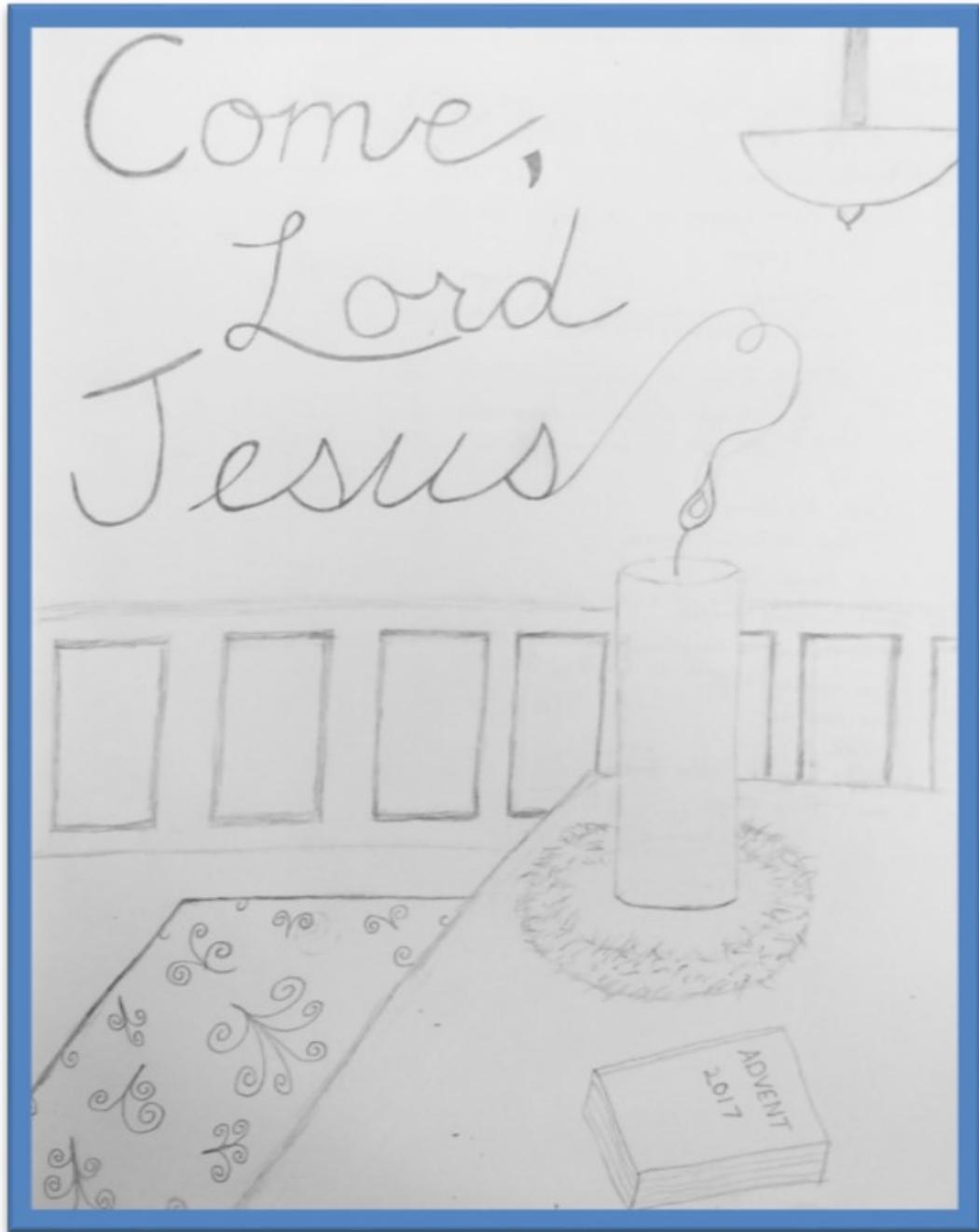


“Come, Lord Jesus”

Advent 2017



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Dietrich Bonhoeffer Excerpts come from:

Dietrich Bonhoeffer's Christmas Sermons (Kindle 2011)

And

God is in the Manger (2010)

PREFACE

*Lord Jesus, come yourself, and dwell with us,
be human as we are,
and overcome what overwhelms us.
(p. 37, God is in the Manger)*

We are coming to this Advent, once again, with different hearts and minds than we have in years past, and yet there is a faint familiarity in the season. Each year we remember the anticipation, the waiting, the need for peace, the hardships of the darkness, and the hope in things to come. This year, we are bringing ourselves to the darkness and saying, "Come, Lord Jesus." We are reflecting on situations that make us say, "Come, Lord Jesus. It's too dark without you here." We are facing the hardships head on, so that we can grow in this time of waiting before the Messiah arrives.

The above prayer is written by Dietrich Bonhoeffer – an inspiration to this devotional. His writings are eloquent and honest, coming from a time of great darkness and hardship – WWII in Europe. He asks hard questions, he asks deep questions, and he speaks freely about the concerns of his time. He sees the need to look for Jesus in the darkness and he does not cease to lose hope, even while looking at the darkness.

On each Sunday, you will find a writing from Bonhoeffer along with an Advent reflection to keep with this theme and inspiration from a man who lived Advent with his life; a man who lived with a holy anticipation for the arrival of Christ.

As we move through this devotional together, I have two prayers: 1) that we will face the darkness together and 2) that we would pray for each other to maintain hope in the coming of the Messiah at the end of Advent. I pray that we will start this new year with fullness and faith, even though we are aware of the deep darkness in the world.

At the end of each day, I invite you to turn back to this preface and pray the prayer written by Bonhoeffer. Ask Jesus to dwell with us, to overcome what overwhelms us, to stay in the midst of our sin, to share with us, and to be our brother in our times of trial.

Come, Lord Jesus. Come.

DAY 1

Luke 21:25-33

“To whom is this addressed? Whom does this word really interest? Who is most affected by this announcement?”

Think of a prison. For long years, the prisoners have born the shame and punishment of their imprisonment. Hard forced labor has plagued them, until life itself has become a burden... Even if some escape, the others suffer. With sighs and tears these others lament their loss and hate their chains. And now suppose that a message came to the prison: “Within a short time, you will all be free. Your chains will fall off. Your tormentors will be bound and you will be delivered.” Can you not hear the prisoners with one voice crying out with all their heart: ‘Yes. Deliverer, come!’”

Dietrich Bonhoeffer’s Christmas Sermons, 1933

This devotion will start and end with Bonhoeffer’s images of a prisoner waiting for their release. This first passage is one where he invites us to imagine with him what it would be like to hear a word of deliverance in prison. The last Sunday will be a passage Bonhoeffer wrote while being a prisoner himself.

During this season of his life, Bonhoeffer had great feelings of isolation from his community and thus felt a need to “go into the wilderness” for a time – leaving his country and his disappointment behind to go serve in London. He had deep convictions about the concerning nature of Hitler choosing to leave the League of Nations. The church added an Aryan clause and Bonhoeffer didn’t see a divide within the church regarding the concerning nature of this clause. Many like-minded theologians were waiting for something more severe than racial conformity. This disturbed Bonhoeffer so he left for a time to serve a parish in a different country.

As I read this passage, the isolation that comes to mind is a young man who was put away on a minor drug charge. I think of a young man who is sitting in prison, not yet having any experience of adulthood outside those walls because, one day, he was stopped and frisked, and he happened to have some weed in his pocket.

How will he feel when they tell him he's finally being released? Will he be as hopeful with anticipation as Bonhoeffer writes, or will his reaction be more apprehensive, wondering if it's going to be a good change?

Sometimes we are like this with Jesus. Sometimes we are absolutely ready for his coming, and other times we are apprehensive when we hear it. After all, it's hard to know what to expect. We want to be excited and ready, but how can we possibly be ready for the coming of a Messiah? Even though we know Jesus, deeply and fully, he is always doing something new. In every season of waiting, we know we will meet the same, loving Messiah, and we also don't know what life will look like when the seasons change.

This is part of the hurried anticipation, "Yes. Deliverer, come!" We like to know what the new season will look like – good, bad, or in between, so we can formulate our reaction. In the waiting, all we have is faith that Jesus will soon bring us a new season.

We have to trust.
Be patient.
Participate as the days go by.

And when the time for our release is announced,
then we can cry, "Yes. Deliverer, come!"

Come, Lord Jesus. Come.

Author: Megan Phillips



DAY 2

John 5:2-8

² Now in Jerusalem by the Sheep Gate there is a pool, called in Hebrew Bethesda which has five porticoes. ³ In these lay many invalids—blind, lame, and paralyzed. ⁵ One man was there who had been ill for thirty-eight years. ⁶ When Jesus saw him lying there and knew that he had been there a long time, he said to him, “Do you want to be made well?” ⁷ The sick man answered him, “Sir, I have no one to put me into the pool when the water is stirred up; and while I am making my way, someone else steps down ahead of me.” ⁸ Jesus said to him, “Stand up, take your mat and walk.” ⁹ At once the man was made well, and he took up his mat and began to walk.

Reformation; noun and verb. We recently celebrated the noun and verb of Luther’s work and vision: reflecting on how Luther’s passion for questioning the traditional Catholic view of humankind’s relationship to God and Christ, shook his world. Accurately or not, I envision folk of Luther’s time in a dark place: dependent on church authority, concerned with their home in eternity, (would there be one?), straining under the oppressive yoke of working out their salvation. Was there much joy in their striving? What of comfort?

As the infirmity of the man waiting by the pool at Bethesda prevented him from reaching the healing waters, so Luther viewed the Pope and church hierarchy as barriers to Christian freedom and faith in Christ for salvation. Come, Lord Jesus!

And Jesus came to Bethesda’s pool, where he removed the invalid’s focus from the waters and onto Himself. There the man found healing. Come, Lord Jesus! And Luther focused our attention on God’s grace to us, on Christ as gift, and on justification by faith, where our healing lies. Now work becomes the fruit of faith. We are free to do good, not because it is required for salvation, but as a response to God’s gift of salvation through faith in Christ. How well we are loved!! There is our joy and comfort; being at peace with our Creator, and free to serve in the ordinary relationships or our simple daily lives. Free to love God and neighbor.

Come, Lord Jesus. Come.

Author Anonymous

DAY 3

Genesis 4:8-13

⁸ Cain said to his brother Abel, "Let us go out to the field."^[a] And when they were in the field, Cain rose up against his brother Abel, and killed him. ⁹ Then the LORD said to Cain, "Where is your brother Abel?" He said, "I do not know; am I my brother's keeper?" ¹⁰ And the LORD said, "What have you done? Listen; your brother's blood is crying out to me from the ground! ¹¹ And now you are cursed from the ground, which has opened its mouth to receive your brother's blood from your hand. ¹² When you till the ground, it will no longer yield to you its strength; you will be a fugitive and a wanderer on the earth." ¹³ Cain said to the LORD, "My punishment is greater than I can bear

For me, "Come, Lord Jesus" is a prayer said by a gathering of close friends in unison which I find to be a joyful expression among friends; joyful in spite of or because one among us recites an alternate ending to the prayer while the rest of us say the same words. How can this joyful experience of praying this prayer together possibly relate to the story of Cain killing his brother? These two things seem like friendship, love, and joy versus crime and punishment. Where is the joy in this bible verse?

Well, the lack of joy in the bible verse is a vivid depiction of why we need Jesus in our lives as a community. The verse depicts a reality of our world for which we need Jesus more than ever; both individually and together. Although violence and death are a part of life we do not need to accept it as the norm. Jesus in our midst as we pray Come, Lord Jesus motivates us to love one another through our attitudes and actions and work together to bring reconciliation and peace to others wherever we can. Amen.

Come Lord, Jesus. Come.

Author: Neal Cook

DAY 4

Ezekiel 37:1-3

The hand of the LORD came upon me, and he brought me out by the spirit of the LORD and set me down in the middle of a valley; it was full of bones. ² He led me all around them; there were very many lying in the valley, and they were very dry. ³ He said to me, "Mortal, can these bones live?" I answered, "O Lord GOD, you know."

The Advent theme this year is, "Come, Lord Jesus." This was my assignment, to make the connection with "Come, Lord Jesus" and "dem dry bone". I struggled. Then I decided to rely on what I have learned in men's Bible study; the art of the "Segway", finding connections to move from topic to topic.

Ezekiel's vision was about how the Lord would breathe life into those dry bones, the Israelites, and lead them out of captivity. What are our "dry bones" of today? They are not a vision but reality.

Come, Lord Jesus and breathe life in to the forests that we have cut down and caused to burn;

Come, Lord Jesus and breathe life into the streams, rivers, and oceans which we have poisoned;

Come, Lord Jesus and breathe life back into the farm lands which have dried up and driven villagers into already crowded cities

Come, Lord Jesus and breathe life into the air we have polluted;

Come, Lord Jesus and breathe life into the fauna we have driven to near extinction;

Come, Lord Jesus and breath life again into the planet which you gave to us to be stewards;

Come, Lord Jesus and breath life into the souls of the victims of wars and gun violence;

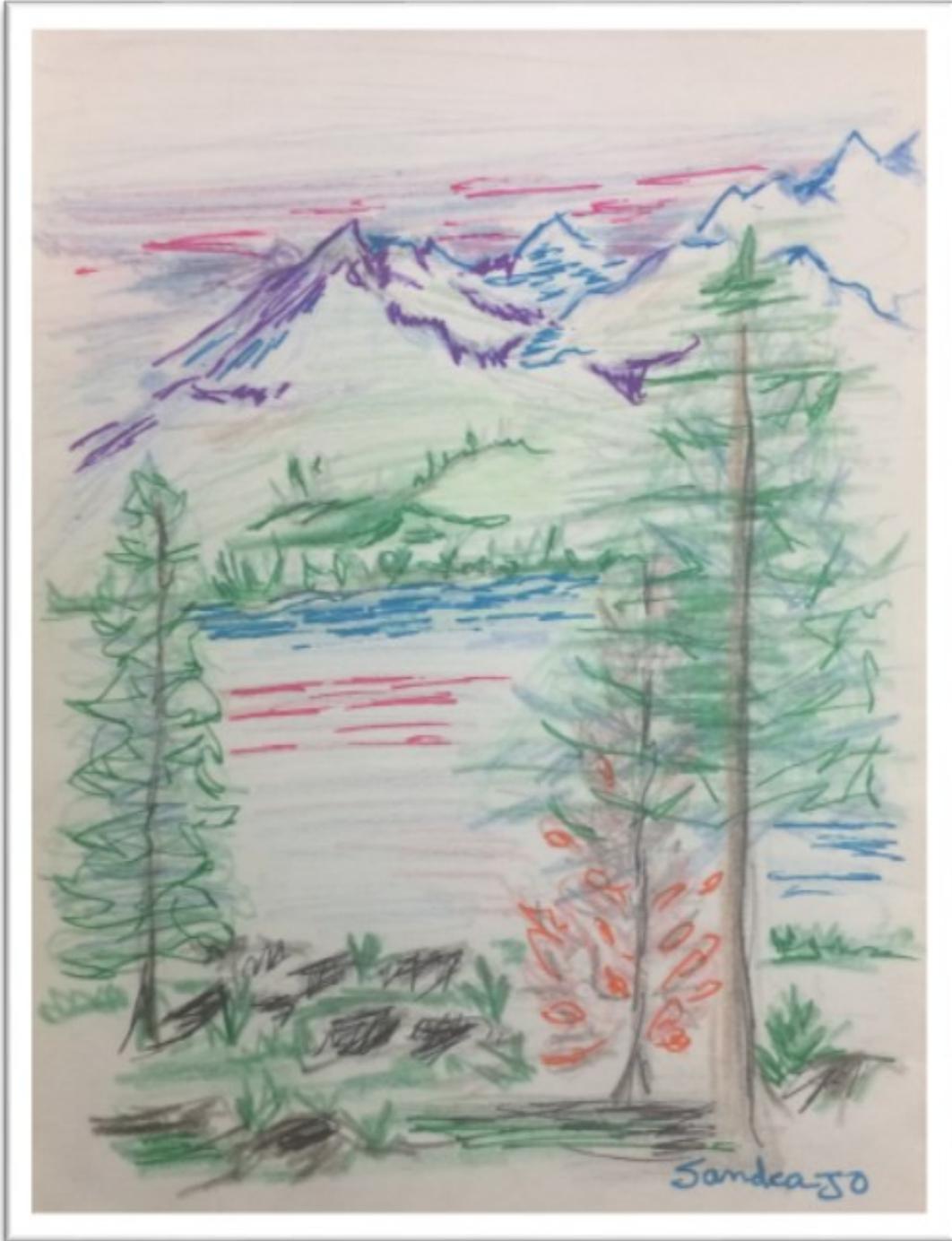
Come, Lord Jesus and lift the scales from the eyes of those who worship at the alters of the gun and greed led by false prophets who do so in your name;

Come, Lord Jesus. Come.

Author: Larry Reintsma

Come, Lord Jesus. Come.

Artist: Sandra Cook



DAY 5

Mark 5:1-20

They went across the lake to the region of the Gerasenes. ² When Jesus got out of the boat, a man with an impure spirit came from the tombs to meet him. ³ This man lived in the tombs, and no one could bind him anymore, not even with a chain. ⁴ For he had often been chained hand and foot, but he tore the chains apart and broke the irons on his feet. No one was strong enough to subdue him. ⁵ Night and day among the tombs and in the hills he would cry out and cut himself with stones.

In this text, the man is possessed by a demon. He is in anguish and suffering mightily and seeking help.

Today we don't heard the word demon. It seems not to be in common use. However, there are so many things happening that we could easily refer to them as demons. It seems that almost on a daily basis some evil... inhumane event occurs that stupefy our minds, such as the recent shootings in our country that appear to have no sense. We are becoming numb to these announcements. It certainly seems that we could call these demons.

"Come, Lord Jesus."

Then we have health problems. One of the primary ones is Alzheimer's or dementia. Even the word suggests demons. Many of us have loved ones suffering from these horrors. It can progress to the stage where the afflicted don't recognize their own family members. This is truly a living horror. Certainly another reason to say, "Come, Lord Jesus."

We, as God's children, have the power of prayer. Scripture tells us that God want us to pray. Through the gift of the Holy Spirit we are urged to pray. I know personally the power of prayer. IT has manifested itself many times in my life. At age 42 it led to a life altering event for me and my family. In today's world, there is more reason to pray than ever.

Come, Lord Jesus, indeed.

Come, Lord Jesus. Come.

Author: John Moller

DAY 6

Psalm 22:1-2, 11

*¹ My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?
Why are you so far from helping me, from the words of
my groaning?*

*² O my God, I cry by day, but you do not answer;
and by night, but find no rest.*

*¹¹ Do not be far from me,
for trouble is near
and there is no one to help.*

When things in your life go wrong do you lament “my God my God why have you forsaken me”? Jesus where are you in time of my need. When David was attacked verbally by his enemies whom he had not provoked he lamented where is the Lord to provide the help he needed. David recorded these thoughts in Psalm 22.

We need to pray “Come Lord Jesus” whenever things go wrong. Feeling his presence should make our fears and anxiety evaporate. I believe the people that witnessed and those affected by the recent mass killings are lamenting like David and really need to feel the presence of Jesus.

Come, Lord Jesus. Come.

Now for a personal condition, my wife and I are affected by her numerous strokes so she is unable to walk and therefore is confined to bed, wheelchair or recliner. It would be easy to lament, why us Lord, therefore we must constantly remind ourselves that Jesus is with us at all times. One way to accomplish this is to read (not sing) the hymn:

“Softly and tenderly Jesus is calling...

Come home...

Come home....

You who are weary,

Come home...”

Come, Lord Jesus. Come. Author: Roger Lundeen

DAY 7

John 11:32-37

34: HE said, "Where have you laid him?" They said to Him, "Lord, come and see."

In this passage we watch Mary become disappointed when Jesus arrived and was present, for she had lost her brother in death. Her belief being had Jesus arrived earlier, she would have not lost her brother in death and he would have been alive.

We all tend to feel this way, having Jesus in the midst. When it comes to our families and/or relatives too. The anticipation of having relatives live longer than expected as they become ill, or as face an extremely severe operation of an organ being replaced from several deadly kinds of Cancer, yet having all kinds of strength and faith. We still loose our precious family or relative in death, then we suffer along with this tragedy. This happened to me in the summer of 1976, July 8th to be exact; I lost a loved one. He was my father, who had given me his name, he died at the age of 59.

My father was a workaholic from 0800 to 9:00 pm in the evening, come home for dinner at 6 or 6:30 pm, and return, Monday through Sunday. During this time he would manage one day off either a Wednesday, Thursday, sometimes Friday, but not every week. My father James would be on his feet 3/4's of the day. He would always make sure all items of merchandise were on sale and ready for customers in a display or table. Somehow this created blood clots below the knees being on his feet. These clots would sometimes work towards the abdomen to cause pain. Also the clots would stay below the knee in the ankles, which kept him home or in the hospital. The doctors requested him to raise the foot of the bed to alleviate the clots. Well, 1976, at the end of June, he came home from the Lakewood Fred Meyer store after opening (I was not living with my parents). He rushed up the stairs of their apartment, changed clothes, came downstairs, and informed my mother to take him to the hospital, now. This scared my mother so much, she had to call me before leaving for the hospital. For two weeks he was in pain (abdominal) yet the doctors asked him to walk around the halls of the hospital to circulate the vessels in his legs.

Eventually I received a telephone call from my mother on July 8th 1976, informing me that the Lakewood Hospital was transporting my father to Tacoma General Hospital to do an operation. The telephone call was at 1000 or 1030.

My mother and I managed to be at Tacoma General Hospital before noon, in separate vehicles. Waiting for my father to arrive through the Emergency entrance and watch him be rushed into the OR section of the hospital. My father said a few words on his way to entering the OR on the gurney, "Jimmy don't ever have this!" which puzzled my mind as he entered OR, and so did the look on his face. At this insistent is the heart of my thoughts asking Jesus to be with him, the doctors, and my mother.

During the wait our pastor showed up from Christ Lutheran Church, Lakewood, Pastor M. E. Nesse. He was not more than five minutes in the waiting room when the doctors (two) entered the room to inform the family they lost my father on the operating table. At the time, they were opening him up to stop the blood clots before entering his heart. It was very hard to watch my mother almost faint, and it hit me so much to become angry at the world. Could not my faith come to be with God when our pastor had prayed for our loss.

This is when the last verse hits in this passage, 37, "Could not this Man, who opened the eyes of the blind, also have kept this man from dying?"

Cause honestly I was angry at my Lord for three to four years, not committing to worship service, reading the Bible, giving a relationship to Jesus Christ. Than I turned to ask forgiveness, because my sense of direction was more negative than a positive outlook on life. When it comes to negativity there's more loss in the power of the Spirit.

As I have read this passage, the words "Lord come and see." Brings a strong sense of reality no matter how I felt in my past." Jesus is there when you're hurting, angry, and have lost a loved one. It has put me in a direction to seek the Lord and not walk away like I did back in 1976. In seeking the Lord I've come to recognize that Jesus comes. It may take a few years for me to see, but he does come.

DAY 8

Isaiah 9:6-7

Amidst disastrous words and signs; amidst the guilt and distress of the people of God, a voice is heard, gentle and mysterious, but full of blessed confidence, announcing deliverance through the birth of the divine child.... This is about the birth of a child, not of the astonishing work of a strong man, not of the bold discovery of wise man, not of the pious work of a saint. It really is beyond all understanding: the birth of a child shall bring about the great change, shall bring to all mankind salvation and deliverance.

Dietrich Bonhoeffer's Christmas Sermons, 1940

We need the hope of change.

More specifically, we need the hope of change when the world seems dim.

Bonhoeffer wrote this excerpt in a sermon just over a year after the start of WWII. He'd been deeply aware of the changes happening in Germany and throughout Europe. He spoke out fervently against the nationalism and the racial superiority, but in 1940, as Hitler won France and Stalin made his ultimatum to the Baltic States, Bonhoeffer's movements became more underground and deliberate. He led a double life of resisting the growing nationalism and ideologies in underground meetings and Bible studies while carefully choosing his words and venues in public.

So, in preaching this sermon, I could imagine he was ready to be lifted up by the hope that comes with the change Jesus brings. A change that subverts all powerful, governmental control. A change that is unexpected. A change that rests on the heart and beauty of a child.

A tiny child brings this hope. Not the adults he sees in power, at war with each other. A tiny child, born in a manger, in the only place they could find, during the census. A tiny child comes into the world and he will change everything.

When I look to the children in our church, I see life in abundance. They are vibrant. They are involved. They are intelligent. They are hopeful.

They know Jesus.

They will bring needed change.

Our world is uncertain. Many people are concerned, one way or another, about the ways in which we see power being used around us. We worry, we talk to each other, and we try to find ways to console one another. Maybe the consoling hope we need is to remind each other that the birth of a child has come to disrupt power. To change our ideas about the world. To bring us into a new and just reality. And that this tiny child changes everything.

Come, Lord Jesus. Come.

Author: Megan Phillips



DAY 9

Luke 2:6-7

While they were there, the time came for her to deliver her child. ⁷ And she gave birth to her firstborn son and wrapped him in bands of cloth, and laid him in a manger, because there was no place for them in the inn.

A homeless man sleeps in an alley behind a restaurant. His head rests in the dried wild grass and his body is sprawled out on the asphalt.

A man rides the bus all night to stay warm. He cries to a Bible passage he memorized. "Foxes have holes and the birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to rest His head." He's swaddled in alcohol and his lullaby is Matthew 8:20.

A homeless camp is hidden in the woods so the police won't give those within 24 hours to move. There are no rooms at this inn, just make shift shelters and tents.

I'm not painting a picture of a traditional manger scene, but some of these folks have Jesus in their hearts.



I find that the poor and homeless can have amazing faith. Jesus didn't come into the world as a mighty ruler full of power and might; he came instead as a poor infant, wrapped in strips of cloth and laid in a cattle stall. Jesus lived among the poor, lame, and sinners since birth. In a sense, these were his people.

Once at a bust stop, a mentally ill man was passing out pages torn from a Christian devotional book. I reached for the one he held out and I said, "Bless you". A scruffy older man on the bench next to us said, "I know you meant God Bless you. After all, all blessings and all good things come from God". I felt embarrassed, I was just trying to say some little words of faith and I was being corrected.

I looked over at the man and he had a big warm smile on his almost toothless grin. I just had to smile too. I guess this is the way I would imagine encountering Jesus. He may correct me, but with a warm, welcoming, loving smile.

At Christmas Christ comes to make us all new, to breakdown walls and establish His Kingdome on earth. He brings peace, rest, and reconciliation between God and man, and he brings peace among mankind. He wants believers to shine with His light and see His light shining in others, even the homeless.

Come, Lord Jesus. Come.

Author: Deborah Fager

DAY 10

Genesis 34:1-7

Now Dinah the daughter of Leah, whom she had borne to Jacob, went out to visit the women of the region. ² When Shechem son of Hamor the Hivite, prince of the region, saw her, he seized her and lay with her by force. ³ And his soul was drawn to Dinah daughter of Jacob; he loved the girl, and spoke tenderly to her. ⁴ So Shechem spoke to his father Hamor, saying, "Get me this girl to be my wife."⁵ Now Jacob heard that Shechem^[a] had defiled his daughter Dinah; but his sons were with his cattle in the field, so Jacob held his peace until they came. ⁶ And Hamor the father of Shechem went out to Jacob to speak with him, ⁷ just as the sons of Jacob came in from the field. When they heard of it, the men were indignant and very angry, because he had committed an outrage in Israel by lying with Jacob's daughter, for such a thing ought not to be done.

I praise and thank God for making me a woman who needs those around her, but yet able to stand on her own feet. It has been a journey of learning; times of falling and times of fear.

I pray daily for those who struggle; that God will be their guidance and calm their fears. Fear holds us back from being free and from growth. Fear causes us to forget that we are *all* children of God.

The passage Genesis 34:1-7, is age old and still current! The lack of respect for our brothers and sisters; and the audacious feeling of control over another is not God's plan of love and respect for each other.

God created all people and created them differently for reasons and purpose we may not understand. Regardless of how we perceive other people to be, they are God's creations and it is God's will for us to show respect to everyone.

Today I pray, "Come Lord, Jesus" for all the Dinah's of the world, and all who feel they have control over others. I pray, "Come, Lord Jesus," that we may, "Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. Rather, in humility value others above yourself." (Philippians 2:3)

Come, Lord Jesus. Come.

Author: Olivia Liening

DAY 11

Mark 5:22-24, 35-36

22 Then one of the leaders of the synagogue named Jairus came and, when he saw him, fell at his feet ²³ and begged him repeatedly, "My little daughter is at the point of death. Come and lay your hands on her, so that she may be made well, and live." ²⁴ So he went with him.... ³⁵ While Jesus was still speaking, some people came from the leader's house to say, "Your daughter is dead. Why trouble the teacher any further?" ³⁶ But overhearing what they said, Jesus said to the leader of the synagogue, "Do not fear, only believe."

Do not fear, only believe.
Do not fear, only believe.

After just receiving word that his daughter is dead, Jesus stays with Jairus and says, "Do not fear, only believe." His friends spoke to him a word of doubt when Jairus had just moments earlier approached Jesus with a word of faith. In this crucial time, Jesus reminds Jairus of his faith. Jesus reminds him of the possibility of healing. Jesus stays with him.

In the verses following, Jesus goes with Jairus to his house and he brings the little girl to life in the presence of her family. A family full of fear... and hope... and faith.

Do not fear, only believe.

When young children are sick, it is hard to leave fear at the door. It's nearly impossible, and when we try, it's a difficult, daunting effort.

So as I reflect on this story, I pray for Jesus to continue to give me faith through the Holy Spirit.

Faith that he will stay when I'm hearing a word of doubt.

Faith that he has already made up his mind to come with me.

Faith that he will come to offer me presence and peace.

Come, Lord Jesus. Come.

Author Anonymous

DAY 12

Isaiah 24:4-5

*⁴ The earth dries up and withers,
the world languishes and withers;
the heavens languish together with the earth.*

*⁵ The earth lies polluted
under its inhabitants;
for they have transgressed laws,
violated the statutes,
broken the everlasting covenant.*

Wait...What?? You want me to write a devotion about this? Full disclosure – I barely make it through the annual Advent devotion book and on my first-round writing, it's on this gloomy topic? I was expecting some Hallmark "Count Down to Christmas" passage, not this! I turned to my kids for inspiration and they cheerfully chime in with "Recycle" and "Keep Nature Pretty" with this beautiful cherub-eques view of the world. Yet all I get when I read this are feelings of guilt knowing our recycling will be overflowing come December 26th with empty cardboard boxes and torn wrapping paper. And then images of waste come racing through my head like some internet slideshow that you've accidentally clicked on, leading you through a montage of clips debating if it's more environmentally friendly to buy an artificial tree or cut one down each year. My head starts to spin with the politics over recent natural disasters and the validity of global warming queuing a John Williams orchestral whirlwind and...

Stop...
Take a breath...



Maybe... Just maybe... that's kinda the point.
Maybe this passage is a reminder...

This whole Christmas season can become more sugar-coated than a Starbucks Peppermint Mocha. Now, don't get me wrong, I love my holiday movie marathons, the Christmas music on the radio and the streets illuminated with twinkling lights. But this does seem to be the season that we try to shed some light into the darkest recesses of our communities, pulling people together, regardless of race, religion or creed to look at and attempt to fix our collective societal wrongs and "spread the holiday joy."

But then, January rolls around, the holiday hangover sets in and the good deeds we've done tend to get packed away in the attic to collect dust until next November. So, Come Lord Jesus. Come to remind us that being good hearted should last longer than the season of Advent. Come, Lord Jesus. Come to remind us to focus less on the long-term ramifications of the trash on the ground and more on the act of not dropping on the ground in the first place. Come, Lord Jesus. Come to remind us that your grace falls gently on each and every one of us like winter snow, washes us clean like spring rain, keeps us warm like the summer sun's rays, and makes us as vibrant as the colors in the autumn leaves. Come, Lord Jesus. Come to encourage us to do those acts year round that cause us to say to ourselves, in my son's words, "Good Job Me."

Come, Lord Jesus. Come.

Author: Fant Family
Artists: Morgan &
Logan Fant



(In the picture, Logan is recycling, saying, "Good job, me!")

DAY 13

Isaiah 1:2-3

*² Hear, O heavens, and listen, O earth;
for the LORD has spoken:
I reared children and brought them up,
but they have rebelled against me.
³ The ox knows its owner,
and the donkey its master's crib;
but Israel does not know,
my people do not understand.*

God is with us.

Like the vision Isaiah saw regarding Judah
And Jerusalem in ancient time
We are God's children
God is with us!

Like the vision Isaiah saw regarding Judah
And Jerusalem in ancient times
Our response is to rebel
Still God is with us!

Like the vision Isaiah saw regarding Judah
And Jerusalem in ancient times
We cannot save ourselves
Yet, God is with us!

Come, Lord Jesus.

God sent His Son to save us
God is with us every day – always!
Thank you, Lord God!

Come, Lord Jesus. Come.

Author: Donna Wendelburg

DAY 14

John 11:1-3

Now a man named Lazarus was sick. He was from Bethany, the village of Mary and her sister Martha. ²(This Mary, whose brother Lazarus now lay sick, was the same one who poured perfume on the LORD and wiped his feet with her hair.) ³So the sisters sent word to Jesus, "LORD, the one you love is sick."

Much like the ancient world we are not immune to illness both physical and the psychological kind. The last phrase stands out to me most especially "sent word to Jesus". We can text, snap chat, instant message and even make a phone call to ones in need. However, do we really **try** (realizing it is impossible to live up to his standards) to attend to the ones that we love that are hurting and sick as Jesus did when they need it the most?

I see a real darkness in the world because we seem to get caught up in our own lives without a connection to each other and/or Jesus. After all, you can order almost anything from Amazon and have it delivered to your door without even speaking to a person. I am guilty of using this convenience without making the simplest "hello" and just staring at my Android phone.

If there is anything that I could change in the world today (or at least make more tolerable) would be to have a better connection with Jesus and each other. After all, Jesus was inconvenienced and going back to a place where he was almost stoned. I *should* try to stay in the moment a lot better but I also realize that I probably will fail more than I succeed. Which is why I call for Jesus to come all the more. He comes in my success of connection and he comes in my failure. He comes when word is sent to him that the one he loves is sick. Jesus comes and goes to the people he loves. My prayer is that I will continue to grow and go too.

Come, Lord Jesus. Come.

Author: Tim Riddle

DAY 15

This song of Mary's is the oldest Advent hymn. It is the most passionate, most vehement, one might almost say, most revolutionary Advent hymn ever sung. It is not the gentle, sweet, dreamy Mary that we so often see portrayed in pictures, but the passionate, powerful, proud, enthusiastic Mary, who speaks here. None of the sweet, sugary, or childish tones that we find so often in our Christmas hymns, but a hard, strong, uncompromising song of bringing down rulers from their thrones and humbling the lords of this world, of God's power and of the powerlessness of men. These are the tones of the prophetic women of the Old Testament: Deborah, Judith, Miriam, coming alive in the mouth of Mary.

Mary, filled with the Spirit and prepared. Mary, the obedient handmaid, humbly accepting what is to happen to her, what the Spirit asks of her, to do with her as the Spirit will, speaks now by the Spirit of the coming of God into the world, of the Advent of Jesus Christ. She knows better than anyone what it means to wait for Christ. He is nearer to her than to anyone else. She awaits him as his mother. She knows about the mystery of his coming, of the Spirit who came to her, of the Almighty God who works his wonders. She experiences in her own body that God does wonderful things with the children of men, that his ways are not our ways, that he cannot be predicted by men, or circumscribed by their reasons and ideas, but that his way is beyond all understanding or explanations, both free and of his own will.

- Dietrich Bonhoeffer's Christmas Sermons, 1933

Mary's waiting reminds me of the waiting I'm seeing many friends do at this time in my life – a waiting many of you are familiar with too. They are pregnant and sitting in between hope for when their baby is born, anticipation for the arrival, and fear for the upcoming realities of parenthood. Of course they don't have the added pressure of bearing God in the flesh, but I have seen the significance they grasp in carrying a child of God.

Mary both experiences the closeness of Jesus and has to wait for his arrival. This is how it is for us in Advent.

We know that Jesus is close to us; we are told this Gospel truth over and over again. Jesus is with us. We are blessed. We also take time each year to anticipate his arrival once more because the anticipation, the waiting, does something in our hearts. It stirs our faith and makes the arrival that much more important. So we experience both nearness and waiting.

Bonhoeffer, like Mary, doesn't cease to recognize God's ability to change our understanding of power. Bonhoeffer looks at Mary's proclamation in the Magnificat and sees hope in a challenging time - a time halfway through his career when he sees the world around him growing in tension, fear, and violence. He not only waits for something more to happen, but he, like Mary uses words of praise and actions to glorify God's goodness and power in circumstances that are unjust.

He knows that the Jesus Mary praises in her song is the same Jesus that will provide hope in the midst of the turmoil in Europe. He knows that the powerful will be challenged, the lowly brought high, and those crying out for respite will be heard.

He knows that he, too, bears Christ and will have to continue to proclaim the radical message of the Gospel as he waits. As he waits to know if the war will indeed start, if a frightening man will come into full leadership, and if the least of these will be able to survive the coming days. He knows that continuing to proclaim the Gospel message is the way to keep Christ near, even in the most uncertain of times.

May we continue to preach the Gospel message when we are unsure of the use of power in the world around us.

May we continue to preach the Gospel message as we wait for change.

May we continue to preach the Gospel message as we seek to keep Christ ever near.

Come, Lord Jesus. Come.

Author: Megan Phillips

DAY 16

Genesis 16:1-6

Now Sarai, Abram's wife, bore him no children. She had an Egyptian slave-girl whose name was Hagar, ² and Sarai said to Abram, "You see that the LORD has prevented me from bearing children; go in to my slave-girl; it may be that I shall obtain children by her." And Abram listened to the voice of Sarai. ³ So, after Abram had lived ten years in the land of Canaan, Sarai, Abram's wife, took Hagar the Egyptian, her slave-girl, and gave her to her husband Abram as a wife. ⁴ He went in to Hagar, and she conceived; and when she saw that she had conceived, she looked with contempt on her mistress. ⁵ Then Sarai said to Abram, "May the wrong done to me be on you! I gave my slave-girl to your embrace, and when she saw that she had conceived, she looked on me with contempt. May the LORD judge between you and me!" ⁶ But Abram said to Sarai, "Your slave-girl is in your power; do to her as you please." Then Sarai dealt harshly with her, and she ran away from her.

When women struggle with fertility, Come Lord Jesus

When women are only valued for motherhood, Come Lord Jesus

When women are insecure, Come Lord Jesus

When women fight against women, Come Lord Jesus

When women maliciously take matters into their own hands, Come Lord Jesus

When women are manipulative, Come Lord Jesus

When women have lost faith, Come Lord Jesus

Come, Lord Jesus to the dark places of despair and control. Look after your daughters.

When repentance is needed, turn them toward your heart of grace and mercy.

When consolation is needed, turn them again toward your heart and mercy.

Love us all through the moments where we are like Sarai.

Love us as we seek control and security.

Love us enough to bring us back to faith.

Come, Lord Jesus. Come.

DAY 17

Psalm 88:1-5

¹ O LORD, God of my salvation,
when, at night, I cry out in your presence,

² let my prayer come before you;
incline your ear to my cry.

³ For my soul is full of troubles,
and my life draws near to Sheol.

⁴ I am counted among those who go down to the Pit;

I am like those who have no help,

⁵ like those forsaken among the dead,
like the slain that lie in the grave,
like those whom you remember no more,
for they are cut off from your hand.



Artist: Denise Sawyer

DAY 18

Mark 5:25-28

²⁵ Now there was a woman who had been suffering from hemorrhages for twelve years. ²⁶ She had endured much under many physicians, and had spent all that she had; and she was no better, but rather grew worse. ²⁷ She had heard about Jesus, and came up behind him in the crowd and touched his cloak, ²⁸ for she said, "If I but touch his clothes, I will be made well."

This is the time of year I struggle the most with depression. The nights are long and the days are often dark as well. I know life is good and I have everything I need and most of my wants are fulfilled. I have good friends and a family that I love dearly. Why then is there this emptiness that I cannot seem to escape?

This text is about a woman that has had a very painful condition for 12 years. She has seen all the doctors and suffered through the treatments and medicines of the time, spending all of her money and ending up worse than she was before. The condition also had a social impact on her. If anyone came in contact with her they were unclean, so she was shunned. Imagine how alone she was. Then she heard about Jesus, and she believed. Having faith that if she just touched his robe, she would be healed.

This was a bold move for such a woman. She reached out and was made whole. This story makes me think of our country's condition. The negativity, the hate, the mass shootings... The news is all around us and we cannot rid ourselves of it. "What can we do?" we say. "How do we escape? How can we help change the world?"

Faith, through Jesus Christ, the great physician, who suffered on the cross, that we would be whole; body, mind, and spirit. In this season of darkness may we be bold like the woman and reach out for the light.

Come, Lord Jesus. Come.

Author: Dixie Baeth

DAY 19

Psalm 13: 1-4

How long, Lord? Will you forget me forever? How long will you hide your face from me?

How long must I wrestle with my thoughts and day after day have sorrow in my heart? How long will my enemy triumph over me?

Look on me and answer, Lord my God. Give light to my eyes, or I will sleep in death,

And my enemy will say, "I have overcome him," and my foes will rejoice when I fall..

We've all been there. The holiday season is here with all of its joys and demands. Work has been a struggle, traffic is basically mechanized combat in a dark and rainy arena, and you realize that a list of "to-do's" is waiting for you at home. It's pretty easy to think you're alone against it all. David sure did--pouring out his heart to a God that he was sure had forgotten him. David was depressed, overwhelmed with sadness and wondering to himself how long this was going to last. Imagining that his enemies are taking delight in his suffering, he makes his demand of God-- "Give me an answer or I will just lay down and die!" That's strong stuff, probably a little more dramatic than we're feeling in 2017, but we do question God at times like this. The good news is that God is with us always and **chooses** to be, even as we forget about His grace and forgiveness in our attempts to do it all on our own and control our little part of the world. He loves us so much He sent his Son to live this same life and experience all of its joys and sorrows with us, so that we might be comforted and saved. And through grace, all we need to do to receive this gift is to turn to Him, saying "Come, Lord Jesus" and it will be done. We need no threats, no demands, just a simple, heartfelt plea.

You are not forgotten.

Come, Lord Jesus. Come.

Author: Tony Willing

DAY 20

Matthew 6: 9-13

*Pray then in this way:
Our Father in heaven,
hallowed be your name.
Your kingdom come.
Your will be done,
on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread,
And forgive us our debts,
as we also have forgiven our debtors
And do not bring us to the time of trial,
but rescue us from the evil one."*

I learned the Lord's Prayer like I learned much of the Lutheran liturgy: in church every Sunday morning, yes, but mostly in Sunday School with Mrs. Ojala, a retired teacher who managed our chatty group with patience and gentle redirection. We practiced the Lord's Prayer and the Apostle's Creed each week, and I could recite them from memory before I finished kindergarten. Those words brought me into a community in a profound way I couldn't have understood as a child; I was gifted with a language that brought me back into the church as an adult, even after a period of separation from it.

As a teacher of literature and a lover of language, I believe that words matter, and in a prayer as familiar to my faith background as breathing is to my body, one that transcends time and age and place, I have to believe that each word was chosen with intention. And I wonder if I've been paying close enough attention all these years. What strikes me now are the pronouns: *Your* kingdom come. *Your* will be done. Give *us* this day our daily bread. Forgive *us*. Rescue *us*.

Nowhere in this prayer do I see my individual self: no *I*. No *me*.

I go to church because I believe that God is love, and because I believe Jesus loves me. I don't think there would be room for me inside the church's walls otherwise. But perhaps the Lord's Prayer isn't about what *I* desire, hope for, pray for. It's not about the way I want things to be done, or what I want. God already knows that.

I wonder if the prayer we speak together is also a call to consider our neighbors, our community, and the messy wider world that holds us all. To remember not only those praying next to me, those who already know the language of our shared faith, but those on the outside, those on the margins, and those we hope to invite into our worship space as brothers and sisters of a common humanity.



The Lord’s Prayer brings us together in the body of Christ. Not *my* Father, but *our* Father. We pray it together. This matters. And the prayer of my heart is that I stay open enough to step outside my own experience, my own comfortable language, to see the folks at the door, and to invite them in.

I am part of something bigger than myself, and when Jesus comes, He comes for us all.

Come, Lord Jesus. Come.

Author: Shari Winslow

DAY 21

Isaiah 59:9-11

*⁹ Therefore justice is far from us,
and righteousness does not reach us;
we wait for light, and lo! there is darkness;
and for brightness, but we walk in gloom.*

We can easily identify with these verses. Justice does seem far from us, the violence that has become so prevalent in our society, the camps of refugees fleeing the oppression of their own government, our own political scene that leaves our stomachs churning each day....It is easy to fall into a deep depression when all we see is the darkness, to wander in the shadows, to grope along the wall trying to find our way. We stumble through the day; we are unable to accomplish anything - as if we are dead. We growl to one another, we want justice but it seems so far away.

Our lives are already busy and now we have to deal with all of this? Why we ask....we don't have time or energy to deal with this black cloud hanging over us. Why is this happening to us? We want deliverance. It seems so far from us.

It does seem we can sink into the pit without any remembrance of the promises of our God. Has not God promised to walk with us, live within us, and carry us when needed? Have we so molded our lives that we start our day with the dark cloud of injustice and violence, and forget to first clothe ourselves with the Spirit that is promised to us? The Spirit that will help us see through the fog of darkness to the promises God has written on our hearts!

Come, Lord Jesus, draw us in so tightly that we start with your arms encircling us, guiding us, protecting us and promising to be our guide.

Come, Lord Jesus and give us confidence in you that we look to you first, come to you in prayer for guidance, comfort, strength and peace.

Come, Lord Jesus, redeem us, have mercy on us, give us grace to live each day in anticipation of your love overcoming the clouds of darkness in our lives.

Come, Lord Jesus. Come.

Author: Marj Hause

DAY 22

Then comes Advent, with all its happy memories for us. It was you who really opened up to me the world of music-making that we have carried on during the weeks of Advent. Life in a prison cell may well be compared to Advent: one waits, hopes, and does this, that or the other – things that are really of no consequence – the door is shut, and can only be opened from the outside.

- Letter from Bonhoeffer at Tegel prison to Eberhard Bethge,
November 21, 1943

Bonhoeffer knows two things: 1) his worldly freedom is dependent on those who have put him in this prison and 2) his spiritual freedom only comes from Jesus, in whom he places all his hope. He can believe in a better future and life for the people of the world because he has Jesus to provide him with faith, endurance, and action. His worldly freedom seems unlikely, but in the midst of literal imprisonment Bonhoeffer knew that his spiritual freedom was sure.

Toward the end of his life, Bonhoeffer found himself in prison due to his participation in the Protestant resistance to Hitler and the Nazis. He writes these words of hope and waiting while literally being locked away and persecuted for his work of justice. His work on the inside of prison is “of no consequence” but his work on the outside has major impacts.

This is why he is free to pray, “Come, Lord Jesus.” He knows that when the door is opened from the outside – when then door is opened by the coming of Jesus – for us to be saved and free spiritually, that the work we do in our following days will be the work that matters. The work of a free Christian who sees the desperate need for a world filled with the justice of Jesus. In Advent we wait for this freedom with great anticipation and hope so that we can return to the work of justice after our time in darkness and waiting. Wherever we’ve been this season, however we’ve felt, we can take heart in knowing that Jesus is coming to open the door from the outside very soon.

Come, Lord Jesus. Come.

Author: Megan Phillips



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