

**Lectionary**  
**Readings for every day**  
**You Select!**



in the HCUC

**No. 21**

**For 4 December 2011**

**Dear Friends**

The glossy page of my magazine is advertising a new coffee-table book entitled “*Heaven on Earth*”. The blurb said: Heaven on Earth—a concept often invoked but rarely defined. In this lovely book it is a concept brought vividly to life.

So what’s it about? The cover says it is about the world’s must-see destinations. The bottom line reads — “Order Heaven on Earth today ...”. From that point on my thoughts went in another direction. How like the prayer Jesus taught—(may) your kingdom come and your will be done on earth as in heaven. How do we get to see or experience heaven on earth? What does heaven have that we long for? What is heaven on earth for you? Is it a bit of peace and quiet after frantic activity and noise? Perhaps a glimpse of unexpected beauty, or a touch on the arm from a friend who truly understands your inner turmoil, a sudden wave of inner peace and wholeness, or the family all together at Christmas—with no tensions or barbed words.

Isn’t it interesting how some of our casual comments can reveal our assumptions. ‘Heaven’ has crept into our language on silent cat paws, as when we express our surprise with “Good heavens”, or “Heavens above!” The image of ‘above’ and ‘good’ hint that we have encountered something that is higher than our usual down to earth experiences, and that we see such experiences as flowing from a source that is constantly good. Then there is the phrase about being in our seventh heaven. It is a residue from the now obsolete world view that the earth was flat and covering it were several domes (like Grandma’s meat covers on a plate). There were seven the theory said, and God’s home was in that 7th veil. To experience our 7th heaven is to be filled with a bliss beyond belief.

The desire to experience some aspect of heaven on earth will be expressed in different ways and words by different cultures and different religions. What is universal is an inner hunger for healing and wholeness, for freedom and the bliss of being our true selves.

**Sincerely, Lester**

	<b>Psalm</b>	<b>Epistle/OT</b>	<b>Gospel</b>
Monday 5 December:	85:7-21	Isa 35	Luke 5:17-26
Tuesday 6 December:	96:1,10-end	Isa 40:1-11	Matt 18:12-14
Wednesday 7 December:	103:8-13	Isa 40:25-end	Matt 11:28-end
Thursday 8 December:	145:1,8-13	Isa 41:13-20	Matt 11:11-15
Friday 9 December:	1	Isa 48:17-19	Matt 11:16-19
Saturday 10 December:	80:1-4,18-19	2 Kings 2:9-12	Matt 17:10-13
<b>Sunday 11 December <u>Advent 3</u></b>			
Ps 126; Isa 61:1-4,8-11; 1 Thess 5:16-24; John 1:6-8,19-28			
	<b>Psalm</b>	<b>Epistle/OT</b>	<b>Gospel</b>
Monday 12 December:	25:3-8	Numb 24:2-7,15-17	Matt 21:23-27
Tuesday 13 December:	34:1-6, 21-22	Zeph 3:1-2,9-13	Matt 21:28-32
Wednesday 14 December:	85:7-end	Isa 45:6b-8,18, 21b-end	Luke 7:18b-23
Thursday 15 December:	30:1-5,11-end	Isa 54:1-10	Luke 7:24-30
Friday 16 December:	67	Isa 56:1-3a,6-8	John 5:33-36
Saturday 17 December:	72:1-5,18,19	Gen 49:2,8-10	Matt 1:1-17
<b>Sunday 18 December <u>Advent 4</u></b>			
Ps 89:1-4,19-26; 2 Sam 7:1-11,16; Rom 16:25-27; Luke 1:26-38			
	<b>Psalm</b>	<b>Epistle/OT</b>	<b>Gospel</b>
Monday 19 December:	71:3-8	Judg 13:2-7,24-end	Luke 1:5-25
Tuesday 20 December:	24:1-6	Isa 7:10-14	Luke 1:26-38
Wednesday 21 December:	33:1-4,11,12, 20-end	Zeph 3:14-18	Luke 1:39-45
Thursday 22 December:	113	1 Sam 1:24-end	Luke 1:46-56
Friday 23 December:	25:3-9	Malachi 3:1-4; 4:5-end	Luke 1:57-66
Saturday 24 December:	89:2,19-27	2 Sam 7:1-5,8-11,16	Luke 1:67-79 Acts 13:16-26
<b>Sunday 25 December <u>Christmas Day</u></b>			
Ps 98; Isa 52:7-10; Heb 1:1-4, (5-12); John 1:1-14			

## THE FINGER POINTING TO THE MOON

As we approach Christmas in the season of Advent the emphasis is very much on bridging the gap, of bringing God and humankind together, of learning to recognise the invisible in the visible, of learning afresh that Spirit is the Source of all things physical, solid and material.

- ⇒ It is the season when we are reminded that Emmanuel means God is with us—the gap is closed. We sing about the love that came down at Christmas, or express it as a prayer “Come down O Love divine”. We want the divide narrowed between heaven and earth.
- ⇒ We don’t need to be trained as a theologian to recognise that Jesus’ teaching had one great theme, namely the Kingdom of Heaven. His parables and stories are all about this dimension. Matthew has 38 references, Luke 28, and Mark 13. He never defines it but says “It is like ...” and sometimes calls it a mystery. Not as a mystery that cannot be solved, but as a dimension that can be recognised only when we evolve our awareness so we ‘see’ above the so-called real world known through the limited windows of touch, taste, hearing, smelling, seeing. This also means it is not a piece of prime real estate somewhere far off. Its not a place. It is more like a state of higher consciousness—again we have the image of being ‘above’. Above the lower levels of awareness.
- ⇒ The carols we sing, the liturgies we use, the rituals we use in church and culture, in homes and families, and the sacred texts and holy books we read may serve us by reminding us of this inner spiritual reality. They can never give us the taste of wonder and satisfaction. They are only fingers pointing to the moon. Once you see the moon you don’t keep looking at the finger. All the things we do in the outer or external world of forms and words are the menu—not the meal. They are the map and not the journey of exploration.
- ⇒ The awareness that Jesus had was the highest, and speediest, overflowing with the energy of the creative Spirit. Since the early days of the church it has been referred to as the Christ consciousness or the Christ Spirit. Jesus made it clear he would like us to experience it too.

## HEAVEN IS NOWHERE – IT IS NOW HERE!



If those who lead you  
say ‘God’s Kingdom  
is in heaven’,  
then birds will fly there  
before you.  
If they say  
‘Its in the sea’,  
the fish will swim there  
before you.  
God’s Kingdom dwells  
in your heart  
and all around you;  
when you know your  
Self  
you too shall be known!

[from the Gospel of Thomas -  
a primary scripture of the Early  
Eastern Church—intimate  
sayings of Jesus to his  
Disciples. Many of them  
do not appear in the New  
Testament.]



The Kingdom of  
Heaven is spread out  
on the earth with glory  
but mankind fails to see  
it!



Cut the wood, I am  
there, Lift the stone, I  
am there.

Joy to the world!  
The Lord is come;  
... let every heart  
prepare him room,  
and heaven and  
nature sing ...

(Isaac Watts)

Love came down  
at Christmas,  
Love all lovely  
Love divine;  
Love was born  
at Christmas,  
star and angels  
gave the sign.

(Christina G Rossetti)

God rest us,  
Rest that part of us  
which is tired.  
Awaken that part of us  
which is asleep.  
God awaken us  
and awake  
within us.  
Amen

(Leunig)