

40 Days of **ADVENT 2025**

A Devotional of the Mustard Seed Street Church with
the Ramblings of Rev. Gipp Forster



About this Project

We celebrate 50 years of ministry and service for the Mustard Seed Street Church in Victoria, BC. We are thankful for the supportive involvement of the Canadian Baptists of Western Canada from our inception in April 1975.

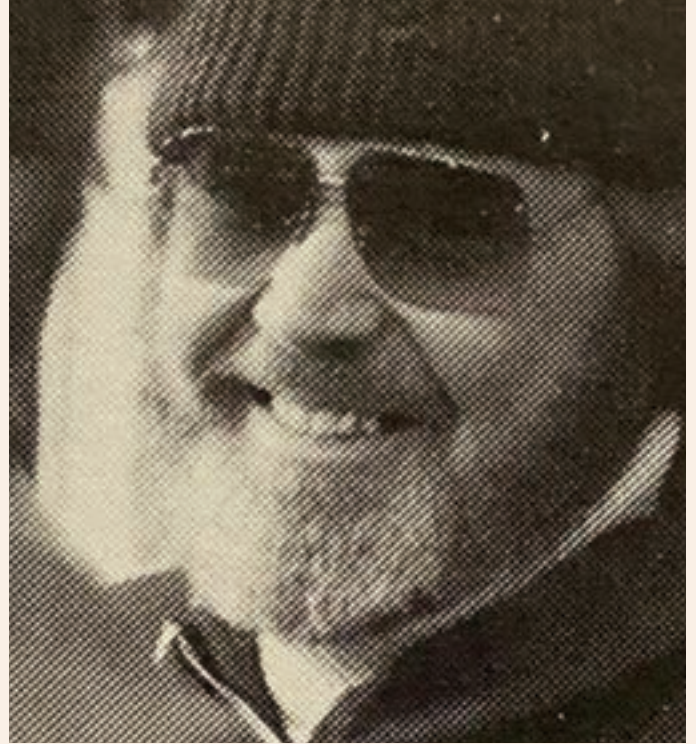
We are grateful for the partnership of the CBWC in the completion of this Advent devotional series project which spotlights the written ramblings of our founder, Rev. Gipp Forster, while encouraging our hearts closer to Christ in celebration of his birth.

Gipp Forster

Gipp was a poet—he traveled and wandered around sharing his poetry wherever he went. He even recorded some of his early works into albums on vinyl records. It was in the mid-60s at a Billy Graham Crusade in Vancouver, BC, that Gipp met Jesus Christ and began life again following Him. This encounter with Christ—following years of wandering—awakened within him new creative inspiration.

The Early Mustard Seed

By the mid-70s, Gipp was a business owner in downtown Victoria. He owned a poster shop on Government Street. One day, a prayer stool was dropped off at his little storefront, perhaps by someone thinking that his was a pawn shop. He kept the prayer stool and created a space for it in a closet under a stairwell. It wasn't long before community began to form there—a prayerful Spirit-led community whose heart was to serve the people of Victoria's inner-city. Gipp's poster shop was the first place to hold the gathering of people known as the Mustard Seed Street Church.



The Ramblings

Gipp loved Christmas at least as much as he cherished writing. His writing had an interesting way about it—a rambling style that was raw and rapid and contained a massive depth of thought-provoking content. I remember seeing him in his office, cigarette smoke floating in dim light as he wrote his pages. So many of his thousands of stories were about Jesus—his birth, death and resurrection. Gipp also wrote of inner-city street life and the people who touched his life there. He wrote of the people who reminded him of his faith in Christ, of authenticity, and what love honestly lived looks like. Gipp met Jesus there.

The Mustard Seed...Today

The Mustard Seed Street Church has experienced wonderful growth over the years. With millions of pounds of food being distributed annually, our Food Security ministry reaches tens of thousands in the city, while partnering with over 80 different agencies. Our Market on Queens Avenue serves all in need, from families and children to the unhoused and refugees, offering a choice-based experience highlighting healthy options and fresh produce rescued from local supermarkets. Our Hospitality ministry offers a safe space where our community may not only feel welcome to enjoy nutritious meals and take part in life-giving programs but also pursue a deeper sense of belonging and find opportunities to nurture a closer relationship with Jesus Christ.

How to Read the Devotions

Before beginning, close your eyes and take a few deep breaths. This can be a time to slow down and centre life again in Christ. A quiet breath prayer or Jesus prayer—simple words of preparation—may be a good entryway to the reading.

Celtic Tradition

From the sixth century, Celtic Christians have celebrated the nativity of Jesus Christ for 40 days before Christmas, mirroring the Lenten season ending with Good Friday and Easter. Celtic believers met together from November 15 to December 24, with an attitude of reverence and preparation (in scripture, 40 days holds symbolic significance). May we, too, enter the story of Nativity with such preparation this year.

The Scripture

A portion of scripture is included for you to read from your Bible followed by a focus verse. If another verse from the scripture passage pops out at you or comes to mind elsewhere, jot it down.

The Ramblings

Each of the Ramblings included in the Advent devotional were chosen from thousands of Gipp's ramblings written during his time in ministry with the Mustard Seed. The ramblings were written in a way to be read on a popular local radio station in the Victoria area, CFAX 1070, in the mid-80s. His traditional sign-off and variations thereof are included with each of the ramblings, "I'm Gipp Forster of the Mustard Seed, I'm a Street Pastor."

Going Deeper

If you have the time to go deeper with the devotional on a given day, this is it. The questions may generate deeper personal spiritual revelations, and it may be good practice to keep a journal nearby to keep notes. These devotions are also suitable to be shared in a small group setting, and the questions may generate good contemplative conversation.

The Closing Prayer

This is a guiding prayer, a closing prayer to complete the study, and a unifying prayer for all partaking in the devotion for the day. This prayer can be an entry point, or closing point to an open community prayer shared in the space of a group.

Dear Reader,

As you embark on this journey of 40 days of preparation for the Nativity of our Lord and Savior, and as you near the day of His coming, please know that we are blessed that you would choose to partake in this Advent journey with us.

From the community of the Mustard Seed Street Church to you and yours, a very Merry Christmas and Happy New Year!

2025 ADVENT DAY ONE

November 15

Scripture Reading: Luke 2:8-20

"Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace among those whom He favours!"

Luke 2:14

Gipp's Ramblings Number 413, 1984

If I had to choose one Christmas out of my album of memories to celebrate with the same joy and meaning, it would have to be the Christmas of 1960. There was no family, save that of a bunch of us who gathered to make our own. No tree, no stocking, no gifts gaily wrapped.

Only five people filled with the loneliness of memory, who gazed intently and silently over the invisible miles of distance, imagining being home for Christmas. We had no money, no food, no promise, except that of our need for one another.

Suddenly, Jack took off his buckskin vest, which I had admired for so long and handed it to me with a shy smile. Sandy removed her earrings and gave them to Shirley without a word, while Mark took the last of his cigarettes and spread them out on the floor for all to share.

I took off my worn, experienced cowboy boots and smiled as I pushed them over to Jack. Shirley gave Mark her wooden flute, and Mark gave Sandy his metal ring.

Then we hugged and cried and heard 'Silent Night' being played in some unknown place. And for some reason, we did something we'd never done before. We quietly prayed and each, in his private silence, discovered the meaning of Christmas.

I'm Gipp Forster and I'm a street pastor. From the Mustard Seed to you, a very Merry Christmas.

Going Deeper

- Christmas can hold many memories for us, good and bad. Also, Christmas can be a reminder for us of the Love of God, and ways that we can be involved in the expression of His Love in the world. So, what does Christmas mean to you?
- It is good to be creative with our generosity in the consideration as to how we can give to those we care about this Christmas. Is there something special you would like to do this Christmas to make it a little more glorious?
- As a gift to yourself to encourage and prepare your heart this Season of Advent, can you commit to taking the time to read, ponder and pray with this devotional for the next 40 days?

Closing Prayer

Creator God, thank You for being so close to us, and for all that You give to us. Thank you for providing for us, enough even for each of us to consider creatively how we can share with one another. Help us to let go more, and in our letting go may our Love for You be magnified. In the Name of Jesus, through Whom may we come to know the Generosity of Heaven even more this Advent season, Amen.

2025 ADVENT DAY TWO

November 16

Scripture Reading: Matthew 1:18-25

"But just when he had resolved to do this, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, 'Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary as your wife, for the child conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit.'"

Matthew 1:20

Gipp's Ramblings Number 421, 1984

Billy said his prayers, then snuggled under the delicious warmth of the blankets and down comforter of his safe bed. He watched the shadows of the snowflakes dance across his wall and ceiling, reflected by the streetlight outside his windows. "Happy Birthday!" he whispered... sinking deeper into the softness of his familiar bed.

Sleep took him then, and he dreamed. He was in a stable, and in the stable was a manger, and in the manger was a Child. It was cold and lonely there, and he longed for his own bed, but he could not tear himself away from the scene he found himself part of.

Without thinking, he lifted the Child from His crude crib, looked at the young mother imploringly, and when in mildness she nodded, still in a dream, he returned to his own room.

There he put the Child in his own bed and crawled in beside Him. His dream ended then, and he simply slept as only a child can. In the morning, he awoke to excitement, and it was only after the tree had been explored one more time and all of his gifts had been opened that he remembered the dream.

He ran to inspect what had been so real; on the pillow next to his was a tiny indent as though a small head had rested there, and beneath the covers was a cloth, like a swaddling cloth, that had not been there before. He smiled, then ran to play with his new toys as meaning became part of a dream that told him the truth of Christmas.

I'm Gipp Forster and I'm a street pastor. From the Mustard Seed to you, a very Merry Christmas.

Going Deeper

- There are many blessings found in both today's scripture and Gipp's Ramblings. Take a minute to review and consider the blessing of Christ in your life. What are the blessings of the Nativity scene that stand out to you?
- One of the biggest messages in this devotion is to "not be afraid." how does this invitation and assuring presence in the message of the angel speak to you? Is there a particular Christmas blessing that comes to mind for you? Perhaps, an encounter with Christ at this time that we remember His birth that was like a gift-to-remember for your life?

Closing Prayer

God, thank You for Your Love, thank You for Your Son, Jesus. Open my eyes, Lord, to Your presence with me this Christmas time. May my life speak, that You are with me. I pray, Lord, that Your Love for the world would be made known through me. In the name of Jesus, Lord and Saviour, amen.

2025 ADVENT DAY THREE

November 17

Scripture Reading: Psalm 139

"For it was you who formed my inward parts; you knit me together in my mother's womb. I praise you, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made." Psalm 139:13-14

Gipp's Ramblings Number 380, 1984

The other day, I asked a friend who identifies as a street person, "If you had three wishes...what would they be?"

Now, this young friend had recently tried to take his own life, and as I watched him ponder my question, I tried to guess at his wishes. I thought money most certainly for he lived from hand to mouth, and he had, all his life. Success for sure, for he needed to be noticed and wanted to be believed in. Happiness was a must, for he had known little joy in his twenty-three years.

After a very long pause, I could see the tears in his eyes. He looked at me in such a way that I was ashamed of my plenty. He said quietly, "I can only think of two wishes that I would wish."

"And what are those?" I said gently, afraid to offend the depths of his eyes.

"The first," he said, "Would be for a family. I've never had one. I've known group homes and foster homes since I was a baby, but never a family."

"The second would be for a career so that I could give something and not always be taking. Then I could have a family of my own and take care of them."

"With those two, there'd be no need for a third wish."

I couldn't speak at first. I thought of my own bounty of family and profession, which I took so often for granted. And as I continued to meet with him, I knew I would draw him close to what I had of family and inspiration, and that I would help him to build a future so that he could have what he wished for.

I'm Gipp Forster of the Mustard Seed. I'm a street pastor.

Going Deeper

- If you could have three wishes, what would they be?
- It may be that we already have what is most important to life. What questions arise within for you through the reading of this rambling?
- How can opening our lives to one another in community be both encouragement and blessing?

Closing Prayer

God, you know our hearts and the spaces of our lives that feel empty. Help us to encourage one another toward you and the experience of hope, even that You have a good plan for our lives. We all need to know of Your loving presence at times, and You can come to us compassionately in our more desolate times, even in our open arms toward one another. Thank You Jesus, for living out grace for all creation through Your life; in Your name we pray, Amen.

2025 ADVENT DAY FOUR

November 18

Scripture Reading: Psalm 84

"Happy are those whose strength is in You, in whose heart are the highways to Zion." Psalm 84:5

Gipp's Ramblings Number 229, 1984

I have walked many roads in my travels, and on these roads, I have met many people with no home, wandering in search of a place but never seeming to find one. I identify with them, for I, too, once wandered like them.

I have also met strangers, and I guess my heart goes out to them the most, for I know what it's like to be a stranger. A stranger is lonely, for a stranger is away from home and remembers that which was good and lasting.

But now I am a pilgrim in search of a city. I walk a highway filled with other pilgrims who sing a song of joy and of homecoming. For a pilgrim is one who is on their way home, much like the prodigal, and they know their father awaits them with open arms and celebration.

I'm Gipp Forster of the Mustard Seed. I'm a street pastor.

Going Deeper

- Along the journey of life, Gipp mentions feeling like a fugitive and transient, a stranger and pilgrim. Can you recall being able to identify in such ways at any time in your life?
- What are the blessings that have met with you as a pilgrim on path for Zion?
- The road to Jesus for each believer is unique and personal for every believer. Is there a pilgrimage that you can perceive in these days leading up to Christmas?

Closing Prayer

Heavenly Father, I acknowledge that my strength comes from You. Guide me to walk in Your ways and set my heart on Your will. Even in the face of challenges, help me to see the blessings You lay on my path as I find joy in Your forever presence. Thank you for being with us, beside us, within us. Forever and always, in Jesus' name, amen.

2025 ADVENT DAY FIVE

November 19

Scripture Reading: Ephesians 1:1-14

"Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places, just as He chose us in Christ before the foundation of the world to be holy and blameless before Him in love." Ephesians 1:3-4

Gipp's Ramblings Number 4, 1983

Once there was a man who had lost his wife in a car accident. He had two children, one of whom had fled to the street and became a heroin addict. The other child, with Down Syndrome, remained at home.

This man lost his job because of illness and, within a year, lost his house. Bill collectors threatened to sue him, and he depended on Social Services to support him and his intellectually disabled daughter. This man was a Christian and did odd jobs around his church, cheerfully and seemingly without bitterness. He would always whistle as he worked.

One day, the minister asked him how he could be so cheerful while everything he loved and cherished was crumbling around him.

The man looked at him gently and with great wisdom and said, "I have seen many times in the Bible where it says, 'It came to pass'. But I have not found one place where it ever says, 'It came to stay'."

My name is Gipp Forster. I serve at the Mustard Seed and am a street pastor.

Going Deeper

- Sometimes, when we consider our walk with God, we want to focus only on the joy and happiness but, as Gipp's Rambling reminds us, part of our walk in life is that bad things happen.
- Can you think of a time in your past when something bad happened but now, with the benefit of hindsight, you can see a blessing?
- Paul reminds us that in all things we are blessed. As you take this moment to recall the blessings embedded in this challenging moment of your life, what feelings arise?
- Perhaps, there is a challenge before you, this day. How can our prayers center with Hope in the One who loves us, who puts and keeps "all things together for good, for those who love Him and are called according to His purpose" (Romans 8)?

Closing Prayer

Praise be to You, God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. Thank You for blessing us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ. Thank You for Your love, and that we can trust You, that we will not have to face anything too difficult, and that You are with us. Knowing this truth can help us to walk through out tough moments with You, even this day. In Jesus' name, amen.

2025 ADVENT DAY SIX

November 20

Scripture Reading: Matthew 6

"Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust consume and where thieves break in and steal, but store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust consumes and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also." Matthew 6:19-21

Gipp's Ramblings Number 155, 1984

We have all heard the saying that "Charity begins at home." I suppose this is true in many cases, but I also believe that charity begins where it is most needed. To buy a new boat while our neighbour goes hungry hardly seems right to me. I'm just as guilty as the next, and I must search my own soul for the answer and not point at others in self-righteousness.

I have no justification for the baubles of this world that I have, but between God and me, I know my excuses are drowned in my own lie. I have seen old age pensioners give five dollars to a charity when their pension cheque can not even come close to feeding them. Or a family who cannot give their own kids gifts for Christmas find an extra dollar to give to a needy family. I look at the plenty I am surrounded with, and I am ashamed of my own greed and plastic caring.

Jesus said, "Do not store away for yourselves things on earth that rust and corrode... but rather store away things in Heaven that do not rust and corrode." I have found comfort on this earth in material things, but I must wonder if it will be the same when I meet my God face to face. I fall short of the mark, and my guilt is like a spiritual cancer. I think it's time I seek a healing. I think it's time I get my priorities straight.

I'm Gipp Forster of the Mustard Seed... I'm a street pastor.

Going Deeper

- Many of us love to collect, sometimes books, or shoes, or tools, sometimes words of affirmation, or words of doubt. Collecting is a natural human response, and often a beautiful blessing, that helps us put order in our world. Is this the kind of "storing up of treasures" that the Scripture and Gipp are talking about in this devotion?
- When, in your opinion, does collecting treasures start to become a problem in our lives?
- We are asked to store up our treasures in heaven. What do you think that means?

Closing Prayer

Lord, help me to focus on storing up treasures in heaven, where they will not be corrupted or stolen. Guide me to make choices that align with Your will and to invest in what truly matters, like love, kindness, and compassion.

Remind me always that You are the Guide that helps me keep my priorities straight. Amen.

2025 ADVENT DAY SEVEN

November 21

Scripture Reading: 1 Kings 8

"Blessed be the Lord, who has given rest to His people Israel according to all that He promised; not one word has failed of all His good promise that He spoke through his servant Moses... Therefore, devote yourselves completely to the Lord our God, walking in His statutes and keeping His commandments, as at this day."

1 Kings 8:56,61

Gipp's Ramblings Number 123, 1985

He was just an old mangy dog who had seen better days. It had probably been cute as a puppy, just like most of us are when we were babies. But now he was just a landing field for fleas, too big for a lap, too scruffy to ever look neat, sitting mournfully outside of a small restaurant, waiting for his master or mistress on a mild Friday afternoon in what Victoria knows as winter.

I stopped across the street from where he sat, and I guess for a moment we communicated, for he sorrowfully turned and looked across at me, and then just sorrowfully looked back into the window where his reason for living sat, maybe enjoying coffee and a doughnut. I was moved by his loyalty, his fierce determination not to let that which he loved out of his sight.

I knew he would gladly die for whomever it was he waited for, lay down his own life to keep his loved one safe. I guess it was his concentration in guarding that which was separated from him by a sheet of glass and a closed door, his frustration of being so limited if danger should threaten that which he guarded, that moved me.

I thought to myself, "If I could be a Christian, so loyal and attentive to my Master, my God, as he was to his, then I might understand true Christianity and the responsibility and love it entails."

Then I went about my mundane chores, knowing I had been to church and saw one of the greatest sermons that had ever been preached by a mangy old dog whose world had stopped in for a coffee.

I'm Gipp Forster of the Mustard Seed... I'm a street pastor.

Going Deeper

- Imagine yourself sitting where Gipp sat and seeing this 'mangy old dog', what would you think? And, just who is this old mangy dog, anyways?
- Could you be as loyal, as devoted to Jesus as this dog is to its master? Why or why not?
- What kind of life is the one that you believe your Master intends for you? This Christmas, may our loyalty to the One we profess to love and serve be clear and create wonder for the world watching around us.

Closing Prayer

Heavenly Father, what a lesson to learn that nothing should be allowed to compete with Christ's exalted position in my life, and no one should ever be elevated above the Lord Jesus. I pray that, day by day, following the Way of Your Son, I will learn of what true loyalty is and live my life to Your glory and honour. In Jesus' name, amen.

2025 ADVENT DAY EIGHT

November 22

Scripture Reading: Matthew 13:24-33

Jesus told the crowds all these things in parables; without a parable He told them nothing. This was to fulfill what had been spoken through the prophet: "I will open my mouth to speak in parables; I will proclaim what has been hidden since the foundation." Matthew 13:34-35

Gipp's Ramblings Number 31, 1984

Oh, how I long to wander with Jesus down the streets of Jerusalem to traipse across the hills of Galilee, to be with Him in a boat or sitting beside it on some mountain as He tells His wonderful stories of forgiveness. I would like Him to take me and show me the place where He was born, where He turned water into wine, and where He raised the little girl from the dead.

I want to sleep near to Him, off to the side of the road by a dying fire, and to have Him greet me with a smile when I wake up in the morning. I would like to bring Him a cup of cool water when He is weary and wash His feet when they are swollen from His journey; to laugh with Him and run with Him across the fields and meadows on a summer afternoon. Perhaps He would sing to me the songs of old when David was king, or the song of Solomon, and bring to life those ancient of times.

I would like to be with Him when He forgives the woman accused of adultery and reprimands the Pharisees for their ignorance. And in the temple, the House of His Father, when He cleanses it of greed. Oh, how I long to be there when glory came down and took on flesh and brought reconciliation to humankind. I would stand beneath the Cross and weep in gratitude that my elder brother and friend could love me that much to take my place in agony.

But my heart rings with the story, and though I long to be with Him, He is with me and with all who will listen and accept—and that is my story and that is my song.

I'm Gipp Forster of the Mustard Seed. I'm a street pastor.

Going Deeper

- If you could travel into the Life of Jesus Christ, what stories or places or events would you like to experience with Him firsthand?
- What would you like to tell Him as you travelled together? What would you like to know?
- Is there someone you would want to bring with you as you followed along with Him, observing His Life, learning from Him and having opportunity to talk with Him?
- Who would that person be and why bring them along?

Closing Prayer

Lord Jesus, thank You for speaking to us in parables, revealing the mysteries and blessings of Your kingdom. Open our minds and hearts to understand Your teachings and apply them to our lives. Help us to discern the truths hidden within Your parables, words of life, and to live in accordance with your will. Grant us the faith to believe and the courage to share Your Word with others. Jesus, in Your name we pray, amen.

2025 ADVENT DAY NINE

November 23

Scripture Reading: Isaiah 9:1-7

“Great will be His authority, and there shall be endless peace for the throne of David and His kingdom. He will establish and uphold it with justice and with righteousness from this time onward and forevermore. The zeal of the Lord of hosts will do this.” Isaiah 9:7

Gipp's Ramblings Number 5, 1986

The bells rang with the beauty of celebrated adoration, and the seasons were blended to be one of worship. The farmer left his plough in the furrow, the salesman his wares on the shelves of his shop, the housewife her preparation for the holiday feast.

“Come worship the Lord,” the bells sang. “Come and be one at His throne of grace!” The old gathered, as did the young! They came like the rising of the morning sun! They came walking and riding! Their eyes cast heavenward; their hands and minds relaxed from labour; their praises gathering in their hearts. It was the Lord's Day, and the bells sang of celebration. And the world once again sang this new song and paid homage to the Prince of Peace in the lands of war!

Anthems were chanted, songs of praise delivered hymns offered to the skies. If a stranger should ask, “What day is this that man leaves his labour for that of celebration?” The answer would come, “It is the Lord's Day, come with us and adore Him!”

This is what it should be, but isn't! This is reality that was traded cheaply for fantasy at the table of the moneychangers! This is subtle degradation at the expense of the Author of life! The Lord's Day comes, and it passes unnoticed by all but the few!

The free world hangs out its sign, “Business as usual!” Clouds gather, and we heed not the signs of the times, nor do we cast our eyes heavenward. The Groom shall return to collect His bride. One shall be taken, and one shall be left behind; and we are audacious in our complacency to yawn, “All is well with my soul.” Hear the bells ring on Sunday morning and hear their song of, “Come let us adore Him!” To rob Him, even of this, is folly.

I'm Gipp Forster of the Mustard Seed. I'm a Street Pastor.

Going Deeper

- What does the “Lord's Day” mean for you?
- Would it be possible for you to dedicate a day in your week to God, alone? A morning, an afternoon, an hour? Could you be intentional with this time, keeping it set aside for Him?
- What is one thing you could do to uphold your relationship with creation and keep space that allows you to adore Him?

Closing Prayer

Oh, Holy One, my Wonderful Counsellor, I need Your wisdom and guidance in my life today. You are sovereign over my greatest problems. Thank You for Your loving hand always on our shoulder. Lord, bring us Your peace that surpasses understanding, bring healing and restore wholeness to all that's broken in our world; Your peace to wounded souls. Thank You Jesus for being our resurrection hope, and the promise that You will make all things new. It is in Your name that we pray, amen.

2025 ADVENT DAY TEN

November 24

Scripture Reading: Philippians 2:1-11

"Therefore, God exalted Him even more highly and gave Him the name that is above every other name, so that at the name given to Jesus every knee should bend, in heaven and earth and under the earth, and every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father." Philippians 2:9-11

Gipp's Ramblings Number 204, 1984

I have read and read through the Bible many times, and each time it is as new and as vibrant as never before.

To the carnal man, it is simply a book—a book they say contradicts itself and is dusty and boring. But when one realizes that the Bible is Spirit and written to and for the spiritual man... the spirit awakens to new life, abundant and eternal life, and the Word of God takes on a full and newer meaning.

When Jesus says, "I am the Way, the Truth and the Life." my spirit soars, for within these words lies my freedom, and within that freedom I am born again. I am not Nicodemus to ask how that can be, for the flesh is limited and without recourse; while the Spirit is unlimited by eternity, where Death holds no victory or sting and the grave yawns with an empty mouth. This cannot be understood unless God so chooses to reveal it. We desire it, for we counterfeit it with humanism, hoping for the reward of recognition, but it is never enough.

Spiritual eyes know the Bible to be more than a book. Spiritual ears hear the softness of the Messiah's words, "Come unto Me, ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest."

The Bible is a book of treasure. A treasure that never rusts or corrodes. It is not dusty. Only the mind is dusty that will not see with the heart. It is Spirit and can only be understood in spirit.

It is life without a grave. It is the Last Will and Testament of my elder Brother.

I'm Gipp Forster of the Mustard Seed. I'm a street pastor.

Going Deeper

- Is the Bible to simply a book, or the Word of God, intended to help us and keep us on track, in relationship with our Creator, God? How does the Word of God speak deeply into your life?
- Gipp speaks here about a deep connection between the Bible and Jesus. In what ways have you considered this connection between Jesus and God's Word?
- Jesus describes Himself in various ways: "the Way, the Truth, the Life." Gipp even considers Jesus his elder Brother, in this rambling. How would you best describe Jesus for who He is in your life?

Closing Prayer

Lord Jesus, we give You thanks and praise. We acknowledge that You are exalted above all things, and that every knee will bow and every tongue confess that You are Lord. We submit to Your authority and Lordship, and we commit to living lives that bring glory to God the Father. We thank You for your sacrifice and for the gift of salvation. In Jesus' Name we pray, amen.

2025 ADVENT DAY ELEVEN

November 25

Scripture Reading: Isaiah 9:2, 6-7

"The people walking in darkness have seen a great light; on those living in the land of deep darkness a light has dawned." Isaiah 9:2

Gipp's Ramblings Number 239, 1984

Some people say there is little hope for the world in our destructive exodus from the morals of a once was society, they say we plunge recklessly to the awaiting gates of Armageddon, and all is lost.

But I believe the totality of loss lies within the danger of forfeiting a belief in Goodness and Promise and settling complacently into a doom's day syndrome that leaves little or no room for hope. We can bring about change if we are willing to go forward where the battle rages on the front lines, and if we are willing to lay down our comforts and traditions to find a solution for a world gone mad.

It might begin in a corner, perhaps an insignificant one, where no one notices or cares, but at least there is a beginning. I believe in God even when I can't see or hear Him. I believe in people even when all seems hopeless. I believe in you, and I pray that you believe in me. And even if there's only the two of us, that's reason to hope.

I'm Gipp Forster. I'm a Street Pastor.

Going Deeper

Is it hopeless? We are living in times of hopelessness; our streets are filled with people who are homeless. Our health care system is failing, and our political leaders seem to be pushing at a half-filled balloon, which only moves to another space and remains the same. We are like the disciples, who cry, "Lord, do you not care that we are perishing?" Are there no answers?

Are we helpless? Have you ever found yourself falling and there is no one to stop or catch you in time—all you can do is wait for the crash and the pain? We are like the man on the Jericho Road who fell among robbers who beat, stripped and robbed him. There was nothing he could do and no one to help; he was in a helpless situation. Like Peter who was drowning in a sea of darkness. He cried out, "Lord, save me!" It is a helpless situation.

Is there hopefulness? Government, political leaders, programs and religion, cannot give hope in our times of darkness and crisis. But God comes to us, in the form of humanity, "Unto us a child is born." He also comes to those who are homeless; He was born in a stable. But He comes not only to identify with us, but to bring us hope; in the chaos, He brings us peace, justice, righteousness. He is here to lift us up out of our hopelessness, our helplessness, to transform our lives into something wonderful.

This is our hope!

Closing Prayer

Father in heaven, we desire Your will to be done in our lives here on earth just as it is done in heaven. We realize that without You we are hopeless and helpless, but You are our hope in these days. May the Spirit of Jesus begin a transformation that will lift our lives to a place where we have this wonderful hope. In Jesus' name, amen.

2025 ADVENT DAY TWELVE

November 26

Scripture Reading: Matthew 16:13-17

"But what about you?" He asked. "Who do you say I am?" Simon Peter answered, "You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God." Matthew 6:15-16

Gipp's Ramblings Number 8, 1984

Sometimes I believe that many Christians today try to intellectualize the gospel of Jesus Christ into our carnal spheres of understanding.

Creating God in our own image, so to speak.

This point was brought home recently when I heard of a certain graffiti found on a wall of St. John's University. It went like this:

And Jesus said unto them: "Who do I say that I am?"

And they replied: "You are the eschatological manifestation of the grounds of our being, the kerygma in which we find the ultimate meaning of our interpersonal relationships."

And Jesus said: "What?"

This is Gipp Forster from the Mustard Seed. I'm a street pastor.

Going Deeper

- The great question of life: "Who is Jesus of Nazareth?" If you saw graffiti on the wall outside your home that asked that question today, what would be your thoughts? How would you respond?
- Take this question closer to home, if you were able to see this question on the walls of your heart and mind, what would be your heartfelt response?
- To answer this life changing question, you do not need to have a theological degree or academic intellect, but a simple reply in your own words, that reflects a great truth, "You are the Christ, the Son of the Living God!"

Closing Prayer

Father God, thank You for coming to us in the person of your Son Jesus who is the image of the invisible God. May our lives reflect the revealed truth, that Jesus is "the Christ the Son of the Living God." Amen.

2025 ADVENT DAY THIRTEEN

November 27

Scripture Reading: John 13:3-20

"Do you understand what I have done for you?" He asked them. "You call me 'Teacher' and 'Lord,' and rightly so, for that is what I am. Now that I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also should wash one another's feet. I have set you an example that you should do as I have done for you." John 13:12-15

Gipp's Ramblings Number 191, 1984

My phone rang the other day, and I didn't recognize the voice on the other end.

"Who is this?" I said.

"It's your boss," came the answer.

"My boss?" I queried. "I don't have a boss! Who is this?"

"Your boss!" he repeated.

I started to get angry. "Look, whoever you are... I'm a minister, the Senior Pastor at my church. I don't have a boss."

"Don't you?" the voice said softly.

Now I was really upset. "Who is this?" I insisted.

"I told you; it's your boss!"

I get a lot of crank calls, and I was much too busy to be playing guessing games. "Look, I've got to go," I said. "You must have the wrong person."

"No, I don't have the wrong person," the voice said. "It's you I want to speak to."

"Well, Boss," I said sarcastically, "Do you have a name?"

"Yes," came the reply, "I have a name!"

"Then what is it?" I said, exasperated.

"My name is Jesus," came the soft reply.

There was silence for a moment. Then, in a choked voice, I said, "What can I do for you, Boss?" Then I sat there shamefaced and listened to my instructions for the day.

I'm Gipp Forster of the Mustard Seed... I'm a street pastor.

2025 ADVENT DAY THIRTEEN CONTINUED

November 27

Going Deeper

- Throughout scripture, God makes His Presence known in so many ways. There are times that He speaks to those who are listening for His Voice. How has God drawn near, sought your attention?
- Has an act of humility by someone, an action that you benefited from, made you sense that in a mysterious way your spirit was being moved by the Spirit of God?
- When you have realized that the Spirit of Jesus has blessed your life in a profound way, did it move you to go and bless someone else?

Closing Prayer

Thank you, Father, that Your son Jesus humbled himself in obedience as a servant, by going to the cross in an act of redemption and blessing for us. Thank You for the relationship of life more abundantly that You've invited us into. Help us to listen closely to hear the leading of Your Spirit in our lives. In Jesus' name, amen.

2025 ADVENT DAY FOURTEEN

November 28

Scripture Reading: Matthew 24:36-44

"Praise be to the Lord, to God our Savior, who daily bears our burdens. Our God is a God who saves; from the Sovereign Lord comes escape from death." Psalm 68:19-20

Gipp's Ramblings Number 176, 1985

Once upon a time three shadows sat down at an invisible table to discuss the fate of the world. There was death, there was life, and there was peace—each with a portfolio that man in his plight was unaware of.

Death spoke first, "LET US END IT ALL," he said, "IN ALL THESE THOUSANDS OF YEARS, THEY HAVE LEARNED NOTHING. LET ME KISS THEM TO SLEEP."

But life answered and said, "DON'T BE TOO RASH. THERE HAVE BEEN POETS IN THEIR MIDST AND ARTISTS AND MUSICIANS. MANY WHO KNEW AND KNOW THE DIFFERENCE. THEY KEEP THE WORLD ALIVE!"

Peace was quick to agree with life and added, "AND MY PEOPLE, TOO, HAVE WALKED WITH THE GENTLE. INDEED, THEY HAVE MARCHED THAT DEATH'S KISS WOULD NOT COME. LET US CONSIDER THIS FURTHER."

Suddenly, a greater shadow covered the three lesser shadows, and a mighty voice whispered within a storm, "WHO ARE YOU TO DEBATE WHAT YOU HAVE NOT CREATED? I HAVE AUTHORED EACH ONE OF YOU, AND WHAT I HAVE STARTED, I SHALL END IN THE SEASON OF MY CHOOSING. AND THOUGH THE DAY FAST APPROACHES, NONE OF YOU KNOW THE HOUR." Death departed from the table quickly to hide in the darkness from whence he had come. Life fled to the top of a mountain to contemplate what he had heard. And peace set up its camp outside the fence of a nuclear plant, mumbling about its lack of authority.

The giant shadow sat down at the empty table. He carried a large book, and after opening it, he made an entry with the tip of his finger and wrote down an hour that none but Him could see!

I'm Gipp Forster of the Mustard Seed.... I'm a Street Pastor.

Going Deeper

- How does the depiction of Death, Life, and Peace in Gipp's ramblings resonate with you. What stands out for you the most?
- Why do you think that life is not an easy straightforward path of peace? If God is a Spirit and gives us life and seeks our good and blessings, how can we relate with Him in our fears, chaos and life here on earth?

Closing Prayer

Lord God, as physical beings we find it difficult to relate to You as Spirit. But we are thankful that Jesus said, "He who has seen me, has seen the Father." Lord, thank You for coming to show us the way and, that trusting in You with all our heart, we know that the future is in Your hands. Thank you for the peace that comes through our letting go.
In the name of Jesus, Saviour of the world, amen.

2025 ADVENT DAY FIFTEEN

November 29

Scripture Reading: Luke 2:21-35

"Then Simeon blessed them and said to Mary, his mother: 'This child is destined to cause the falling and rising of many in Israel, and to be a sign that will be spoken against, so that the thoughts of many hearts will be revealed. And a sword will pierce your own soul too.'" Luke 2:34-35

Gipp's Ramblings Number 404, 1984

A little boy once stood in the doorway of a great cathedral, and he wouldn't move. The priest would try to chase him away, but in moments the little boy would be back again.

One day, an old, homeless man sat down on the steps near him. He smiled at the little boy and said, "Every day you stand here, every day you wait. Why do you do this? Whom do you wait for?"

And the little boy without a smile answered, "I'm waiting for Christmas."

"Why?" asked the old man. "Because my daddy has no work," the little boy sobbed. "And because we have so little to eat and because my wooden soldier is broken."

"But, what does that have to do with Christmas?" asked the man.

"Because last Christmas we had no food and I had no toys, but then, people came laughing and brought us a huge turkey and a whole bunch of other things. And candy, too, and a wooden soldier for me. But the food went quickly, and my wooden soldier got broken. So now I'm waiting for Christmas so that we can eat again, and my wooden soldier can be fixed. Because the people said it all came from the Christmas spirit."

The old man with tears in his eyes rose from the steps, patted the little boy on the head, and shuffled down the street. And the little boy waited for Christmas so that his family might be embraced by caring and that his wooden soldier might be fixed.

I'm Gipp Forster, and from the Mustard Seed to you... have a very Merry Christmas.

Going Deeper

- Often at the season of Christmas we find broken people, young and old, at the doors of our churches. Why is this?
- There is such expectation and wonder in the character of the child in Gipp's rambling. Who do you picture this child as, who was refused entrance?
- If someone who was broken in life was standing at the entrance of your church, and asked you what is the Spirit of Christmas, how would you answer their question?

Closing Prayer

Lord God, as physical beings we find it difficult to relate to You as Spirit. But we are thankful that Jesus said, "He who has seen me, has seen the Father." Lord, thank You for coming to show us the way and, that trusting in You with all our heart, we know that the future is in Your hands. Thank you for the peace that comes through our letting go.
In the name of Jesus, Saviour of the world, amen.

2025 ADVENT DAY SIXTEEN

November 30

Scripture Reading: Luke 2:1-7

“So, Joseph also went up from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to Judea...while they were there, the time came for the baby to be born, and she gave birth to her firstborn, a son. She wrapped him in cloths and placed him in a manger, because there was no guest room available for them.”

Luke 2:4,6-7

Gipp's Ramblings Number 422, 1984

Every year it's the same. People complain of the commercialism of Christmas and “can't wait until it's over.” But, oh, what joy we forfeit in our bitter complaining.

Christ was born into commercialism as Rome sought to tax an overburdened people. Money was bartered for shelter, and inflation for the moment was the rule.

But it didn't stop the shepherds from leaving their flocks to bring their gifts. Neither should it stop us from entering the stable of meaning to behold the grace of God.

The Christmas spirit is not an accident, not brought on by brightly lit lights or gaily wrapped presents.

The Christmas spirit is that of the Child, the Prince of Peace, and the money changers cannot change that.

Let us forget what others are doing and concentrate instead on what God is doing in the wonder of this Christmas season. Let us make room for Him in our hearts, and the commercialism will give way to a stable, and the gift given to mankind, the gift of a baby and the salvation of the world.

I'm Gipp Forster and I'm a street pastor. From the Mustard Seed to you, a very Merry Christmas.

Going Deeper

- Have you found yourself in a social gathering and feeling shut off from conversations surrounding you, standing there alone? How has being ignored or feeling unimportant made you feel in life?
- Why in your opinion is Christmas considered the loneliest season of the year? Is there a reason for this?
- Do gifts, lights and busyness of the season generate the spirit of Christmas? If not, what do you think is missing?

Closing Prayer

Father in heaven, help us to see and embrace the greatest gift that came in the person of the Christ child. Give us new vision this Christmas for the most important thing, that You loved us so much that You would send Your Son. Our souls are lifted by Your love, our loneliness is lifted, and we feel the acceptance of Your love. May we be mindful to share this Good News to the world around us this Christmas. In Jesus' name, amen.

2025 ADVENT DAY SEVENTEEN

December 1

Scripture Reading: 1 Corinthians 13:1-13

“Love never fails... For now we see only a reflection as in a mirror; then we shall see face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I am fully known. And now these three remain: faith, hope and love. But the greatest of these is love.” 1 Corinthians 13:8,12-13

Gipp's Ramblings Number 40, 1986

When I was a little boy, I took my security for granted and expected to be housed and fed, protected, loved, cherished, and clothed. Love was an accepted fact, not something to be dissected or written about. Love didn't have to be understood. It was just there!

But as the years began to take their toll, love suddenly had to defend itself, give a reason for its existence, prove itself before acceptance was complete. It began to take on new shadows, new masks, so to speak! Its innocence was shed like a cocoon, its child-like simplicity was abandoned for armour, and its maturity was stunted by expectations.

Often it sat at the tables of moneychangers and debated its solitude with noise. Love had many identities. Some saw love as a tease and would not believe it to be anything else. Others as like distant royalty to be worshipped, but never ever close enough to be considered real. Still others saw love as a butterfly, flitting from leaf to leaf but never staying long in one spot.

A very few see love for what it is: a giving, loving entity without excuse; a healing wonder of blessedness without any masks, save that of truth. Love stands quietly in authenticity next to the counterfeit, and that which loudly seeks attention. Love sings a sweet and untroubled song amidst the noise of demand and expectation. There is nothing cheap about this love.

The only cheapness is often our own approach to wondrous expanse of God's love. The love of God is selfless and blameless. Love is a star in the hand of the Son of God. We have painted love, at times, with hideous colours, but still God's love reaches out beyond the neon of our thoughts to heal our afflictions and draw us to the heart of unconditional concern and give us rest. The heart of love is the heart of God, and that is where love dwells.

I'm Gipp Forster of the Mustard Seed. I'm a street pastor.

Going Deeper

- The world speaks and sings of love as though it a packaged gift. When you first opened it, what did you discover about love?
- If you were asked to describe 3 words of what true love is, what would you say, and why?
- The love of heaven and the love of the world are separate. Take a moment to consider their qualities and defining characteristics.

Closing Prayer

We thank You, Father, for Your love that came from heaven, and was clothed in humanity, in the person of Your Son, Jesus. Thank You that in the life of Your Son we can learn of what Your love on earth, as it is in heaven, looks like. Give us courage to live into Your love, especially when the enemy of our souls seeks to distract us, even with the ease subtle compromise. In Jesus' name, the One who rescues us into His love, amen.

2025 ADVENT DAY EIGHTEEN

December 2

Scripture Reading: Galatians 5:22-26

“Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit. Let us not become conceited, provoking and envying each other.”

Galatians 5:24-26

Gipp's Ramblings Number 171, 1984

Jesus said, "Go out into the world and preach the gospel." He also said, "By their fruits you shall know them."

I think often we get these sayings mixed up and take them out of context. I believe God wants spiritual fruit and not religious nuts.

Christianity rests not only on what man says but on what he does and who he is. Jesus said, "If you want to be great in the Kingdom of Heaven... you must be the servant of all." To be a bully is not to preach the gospel, and the fruits of a bully are distasteful to most.

Fanaticism is often mistaken for zeal, and condemnation stunts forgiveness until it becomes only a word.

If Christianity in the hands of humankind is to be believed, then there must be invisible words within a touch, whispered encouragement when things seem darkest, a belief in the goodness of the gospel that it will prevail against all odds.

To be a bearer of light and infinite patience in the deepest of valleys... is to be a bearer of the Gospel.

I'm Gipp Forster of the Mustard Seed. I'm a Street Pastor.

Going Deeper

- The Love of God is a light, like a city on hill, and it feels light like peace. Have you encountered someone with billboard around their neck condemning the world? How has it made you feel?
- Has there been a moment in your life that someone in a gentle manner met a deep need in your life. How would explain their presence with you, or the spirit within them?
- Consider the fruit of the Spirit and your life. Choose one of the fruitfruits that Paul mentions in Galatians 5:22 to describe yourself by. What is the taste of this fruit as people would it experience it through your life.

Closing Prayer

Oh Lord Jesus, help us to know humility and to live into loving service for one another. Open our hearts to one another, as we surrender our self-interest, for the experience of Your Presence. Thank You for coming to us, inviting us into Your love, that the world may know we follow You, by our love. In Jesus' name, amen.

2025 ADVENT DAY NINETEEN

December 3

Scripture Reading: Luke 2:8-16

"An angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. But the angel said to them, 'Do not be afraid. I bring you good news that will cause great joy for all the people. Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; He is the Messiah, the Lord.'" Luke 2:9-11

Gipp's Ramblings Number 405, 1984

Never does memory become so active as in the Christmas season. Memories of odours in warm kitchens of popcorn, strings of high snowbanks, and delicious apples, peppermint candy, and carols softly sung.

Yesterday's Christmas seems always to be finer than today's. There is always a comparison with that catch-all phrase, "I remember when...!"

Indeed, Christmas seems to become more commercialized with each passing season, but its softness and meaning can never be lost in our struggle to count receipts or bills. For its gentle longing is felt in the hearts of all of those who will take time to remember and to wonder at the unexplained tear that crystalizes on a hardened cheek.

I remember sleighs and warm hay streets that became ice palaces, snowmen that guarded the front lawn, and a Salvation Army band playing carols and marching from block to block. Now I am older, but I see in the eyes of my children that same wonder and enchantment as they nestle in the magic of Christmas and touch its meaning with a gentle hand.

No, I've not forgotten the Child nor the Spirit that bathes us in goodwill. For He is the centrepiece, and my gratitude to Him rests by the hearth of thanksgiving. To Him be the glory and the wonder of Christmas. To Him and for Him is the celebration, for He is the author of our memory.

I'm Gipp Forster and from the Mustard Seed to you... have a very merry Christmas!

Going Deeper

- As we get older, we have more Christmas memories to draw on. Are there a few good Christmas memories that come to mind for you following this reading?
- What aspects of the Christmas season in general resonates in your spirit; the gifts, the music or the family gatherings. Choose something and consider its deeper meaning for you?
- Is it true that children enjoy Christmas more than adults? What are the changes in life for that to happen, and how can we all experience the magic of Christmas the way it was intended to be?

Closing Prayer

Lord God, thank You for the gift of memory, and that we have this time of year to remember Your love and birth, that our relationship with You might be restored. Spirit of God, keep our hearts and minds centred on You through this season of Advent. There are so many distractions. Help us to hear Your songs, to think on You, and to remind the world around us of the Good News, that God is with us. In Jesus' name, amen.

2025 ADVENT DAY TWENTY

December 4

Scripture Reading: Luke 15:11-24

"When he came to his senses, he said, 'How many of my father's hired servants have food to spare, and here I am starving to death! I will set out and go back to my father and say to him: Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son; make me like one of your hired servants.' So, he got up and went to his father." Luke 15:17-20

Gipp's Ramblings Number 49, 1986

I don't think any of us realize fully the vast number of wounded roaming our streets, seeking to survive amidst neon and concrete! Some are emotionally distressed and seeking support. Others portray the adverse effects of the drugs that have become an accepted part of our society, and big money is to be made not only by shadowed dealers but by white collar executives who hide behind golf carts.

On our streets are our vulnerable wanderers, pilgrims in search of an impossible city. They can seem a distance away, and the voices within can feel taunting, as they can drift unknowingly to the shores of invisible nightmares. Yet there is a deeper resilience within that yearns for new hope, new life.

As I speak to you now, there are some out there who are sometimes clinging to last breaths, on the edge of overdose. Many are unhoused individuals whose hope could be found in safe, stable shelter where needed support might be offered. There are parents and loved ones who weep for the waiting, for those they care for out there lost for such wounding and pain, praying for their return and held by fear each time the telephone rings.

Often lonely and unhappy, as we can be, on our roads to what seems nowhere. The foxes have their dens, the birds their nests, but we, like Jesus, have no place to lay their weary heads.

We watch our soap operas, our sports events, the news, and the animal kingdom while we also search for escape, a craved for story-change, and some kind of acceptance, value and hope that can so soon feel smothered by the smoke of endless struggle and insurmountable opposition, where they fell out of the boat but no one came in search of them.

There, waiting in these waters for hope to arise, bobbing and floating in the churning waters of indifference and complacency. We are out there now wandering and waiting to be found.

I'm Gipp Forster of the Mustard Seed... I'm a street pastor.

2025 ADVENT DAY TWENTY *CONTINUED*

December 4

Going Deeper

- Have you encountered someone who was unhoused or affected by substance use disorder? What was your heart felt response to meeting them?
- Jesus was unhoused. It is written that “The Son of Man has no place to lay his head.” (Matthew 8:20). Why do think that Jesus left his home to become a wandering messenger of the Kingdom?
- He identifies with each one of us and experienced the worst of suffering even to the point of such horrible punishment and death on the cross; yet He loved us. What steps can you take to bring the love and transformative Good News of Jesus’ life into the lives of those who feel oppressed?

Closing Prayer

Thank you, Jesus, for the way that You lived, close to the suffering, oppression, and marginalization of this world. You know what it means to feel cast off and rejected. May we be moved by Your love to those who are experiencing all forms of poverty. Thank You for Your vision for this loving action, that as we come alongside anyone suffering with compassion and care to for their relief, we are loving and serving You. In Jesus’ name, amen.

2025 ADVENT DAY TWENTY-ONE

December 5

Scripture Reading: 2 Corinthians 5:11-21

"So, from now on we regard no one from a worldly point of view. Though we once regarded Christ in this way, we do so no longer. Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come: The old has gone, the new is here!"

2 Corinthians 5:16-17

Gipp's Ramblings Number 206, 1985

Ebenezer Scrooge saw Jacob Marley in a door knocker, and shortly after, he beheld Marley's ghost over a steaming bowl of gruel. He was later visited by the Ghosts of Christmas Past, Christmas Present, and Christmas Yet to Come.

His supernatural experiences changed his life and turned a hardened miser into a kindly old man. Bob Cratchit needed little changing for he found celebration in priceless love without the adornment of possessions. I am glad for Ebenezer, thankful for Bob Cratchit, and I rejoice that Tiny Tim was made whole and feasted on a humongous turkey.

My sympathy, however, lies with Jacob Marley and his miles of ponderous chains. I see the hopelessness of death to carry, always, what was not rectified in life. Jacob knew too late what should have been learned early, and though he became a messenger of warning, he still had to trudge back into his abyss of shrieks, moans, and clanking chains.

Is there not a lesson here for each of us? To rectify now what cannot be rectified later? Should we not put away our "Bah, humbug" and embrace the words of a crippled boy, "God bless us... everyone!"?

How many links in a year do we add to our invisible chain? How often is the milk of human kindness our only fare? How many ghosts haunt us each Christmas, and how many times do we say, "I am too old to change!"?

If you are out there, Ebenezer, remember Jacob Marley and his chain. You can still rectify and change tomorrow. You must, as I must, for Christmas can loose our chains, and bring forth the sunshine of promise.

I'm Gipp Forster of the Mustard Seed, and I'm a street pastor.

2025 ADVENT DAY TWENTY-ONE CONTINUED

December 5

Going Deeper

- “The old has gone, the new is here!” In Christ, what does this proclamation mean to you? Can you see the difference in your life between the old and the new?
- Gipp poses a few questions for us to consider in this rambling. Are we concerned about the mistakes we’ve made, and can we take courage to rectify them while we are still here?
- Could this movement demonstrate humility and the heart of reconciliation for those who are in Christ Jesus?
- Do you feel the hope of reconciliation or the freedom through redemption that Christmas brings in the birth of a Saviour who takes away the sins of the world, rectified or not?

Closing Prayer

Lord, Jesus. Thank You for being our Hope. We need your help. Lead us into gentler ways of being with ourselves and one another. When there is opportunity to rectify wrongs, let there be peace—and when opportunity does not come about, may we trust you and let there be peace. You are the One who saves and invites all of us beyond shame and the pain of our past into freedom in Your Spirit, life lived more abundantly. In you alone, Jesus, amen.

2025 ADVENT DAY TWENTY-TWO

December 6

Scripture Reading: Matthew 25:31-46

“And the Son of Man will answer them, ‘Truly I tell you, just as you did it to one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did it to me.’ Matthew 25:40

Gipp's Ramblings Number 225, 1985

He was alone in the shadows, veiled by darkness and rain, huddled but standing! Once he had been a boy with a rocking-horse with caring hands to tuck him into bed and soft words to bid him good-night. Now, he had become grey, an object without entity, a shadow amongst shadows, a fragment of a never-ending night that sucked the marrow from the bones of a long-forgotten day, when smiles had meaning.

He had become one who lived by bottles of cheap drink and shattered, fragmented dreams. No eyes took time to behold him unless vacant by apathy or in disgust. No one knew or cared if today or yesterday or tomorrow was his birthday, or if grown children wondered about his whereabouts after so many years, or if he felt pain when he fell, hitting his head against the curb. An object to be ignored, to be saved by the religious, to be a point of discussion to the advocates of change, to be a nuisance to those who enforced law.

He was a part of freedom, a cowboy without a horse, a politician without a platform, a preacher without a pulpit, a body without a life! He was the signature of indifference on the parchment of mankind. Like all things, he had been labelled (and, how careful we believe we are with labels). Like all things, he had been categorized. Like some things, he had been left to die and to fade away with as little fuss as possible.

“Unhoused...transient...alcoholic...addicted...traumatized...emotionally distressed!” It made no difference what his species called him, at least not to him! He was part of the night like a discarded candy wrapper blown about by the wind of change.

I'm Gipp Forster of the Mustard Seed. I'm a street pastor.

Going Deeper

- Jesus identified himself as one of, even brother to those who were considered outcast and lowly in society. How does the scripture reading speak to you?
- Can you see the humanity that Gipp gives to the person he is describing in his rambling. What happens within us when we begin to see the deeper humanity in those who are different than us?
- It feels like the character Gipp mentions in the rambling is someone we might see along the streets, on the sidewalks or down the alleys of the inner-city. How do you feel when you hear someone described in such ways?

Closing Prayer

Lord, help us to see You in the faces of those who are often overlooked and forgotten: the hungry, the thirsty, the stranger, the sick, the imprisoned, and the poor. May our hearts be filled with compassion and may we be moved to help those who are hurting, recognizing that in serving them, we serve You. We pray that we may be your hands and feet in the world, bringing comfort, care, and support to those who need it most. In Jesus' name, amen.

2025 ADVENT DAY TWENTY-THREE

December 7

Scripture Reading: Hebrews 13:1-3; James 2:3-5

“Be not forgetful to entertain strangers: for thereby some have entertained angels unawares. Remember them that are in bonds, as bound with them; and them which suffer adversity, as being yourselves also in the body.”

Hebrews 13:2-3

Gipp's Ramblings Number 2, 1983

I saw a person experiencing homelessness today. They were sitting on the pavement with their backs resting against a wall. I don't know if they were just sleeping.

Their clothes were encrusted with certain smells, and there were signs that only active addiction can detail. Unfortunately, at this moment what came to mind was a dried leaf floating on the sea of humanity, without direction or course. I wondered if they knew it was December or that it was a few short weeks 'til Christmas.

I thought about death and life. I thought about how life could kill but never allow you to die. I thought of Christmas trees and brightly coloured lights, tinsel, and gaily wrapped gifts. Artificial things to remind us we were alive and seasonal jaunts to convince us we were happy.

I passed by this person who did not fit into the Christmas carols I loved to listen to nor the manger scene in the department store window. They seemed to be dead in some way, and I was alive. I thought it would be easy to forget, but it wasn't. I heard a choir from some loudspeaker singing, "Peace on earth, goodwill to men."

When I went back, they were gone. I thought of something I had read in the Bible: "Be careful how you entertain strangers, for you may be entertaining angels unaware." I wondered then who this person was that I had met, angel or tramp?

Perhaps they were the Christmas Spirit wanting to melt the plastic, and come into my life. I had walked past an opportunity to be real, to know true life, to reach out my hand and touch Christmas. And I was poorer because of my rejected encounter.

I wondered then who was alive and who was dead? A closed heart or fallen humanity.

My name is Gipp Forster... I am a street pastor.

2025 ADVENT DAY TWENTY-THREE *CONTINUED*

December 7

Going Deeper

- Gipp was open with his encounter of someone he passed by on the street. When you pass by someone who is seated on the street, or leaning over, or lying there, what feelings within arise?
- Can you imagine what your response would be if you passed by Jesus on the street? Would you recognize Him who identified himself as one of the least of these?
- Consider ways that you can connect with those who are different than you. How can I be more aware of the feeling of discomfort or fear that arises in me toward those who are not like me, and respond in a way that brings glory to the One, Jesus, who I follow?

Closing Prayer

Thank you, Lord, for the way that You came to us, as one in need. Help us to realize the need within us for You, and the need within the one beside us also for You. Lord, between us and the one who comes across as different, may Your Love come alive and change us. The world we enliven then with new hope, and by such love, Your peace and goodwill. Amen.

2025 ADVENT DAY TWENTY-FOUR

December 8

Scripture Reading: Psalm 37

"Trust in the Lord and do good; dwell in the land and enjoy safe pasture. Take delight in the Lord, and He will give you the desires of your heart." Psalm 37:3-4

Gipp's Ramblings Number 18, 1985

How much are we willing to pay for peace? Not in dollars that we feed our government! Not in rallies and protest marches, letters to the editor, and petitions signed! How much are we willing to pay from ourselves? Not in our pocketbooks or our voices but in our hearts?

How much are we willing to be at peace with youth and youth with adults, at peace with government, with a noisy neighbour, a person who speaks another tongue, a person whose skin is a different tone, or whose culture differs from ours? How much are we willing to pay for peace? Are we willing to make the first overture towards a provincial or federal government, regardless of whether they are right or wrong, to bring forth in support much-needed change? Are we willing to overlook in the name of peace those who slight us, say all calamity against us, and spitefully use us, and instead seek to heal the differences that separate us?

Are we willing to be peacemakers and not troublemakers to bring harmony instead of anarchy? Are we willing to allow wisdom a free voice and not demand a utopia in the foolishness of unnurtured thought? Are we willing to forgive our enemies, to welcome a stranger to share our bounty, to defend decency? Are we willing to stand up and be counted and bring about change in our own society before we try to take on the world? Are we ready for a return to morality in our own homes and lives? How much are we willing to pay for peace?

I'm Gipp Forster of the Mustard Seed... I'm a Street Pastor.

Going Deeper

- Peace calls for a concerted effort; we are all complicit and responsible for our sharing in the freedom, and deep breath that peace brings. What am I willing to do for my peace? What am I willing to do for the peace of my neighbour?
- The pendulum of peace shifts, and while some are made more comfortable others experience increasing unrest. Then, the pendulum of peace shifts again; back and forth it goes. Can our struggle and fight for peace cause disharmony? Is there a way that we all can experience peace?
- Reverberations of pain and desolation can be felt throughout all creation. What are the extents that we are willing to trudge toward for the peace of the stranger, those who are different, and experiencing certain oppression?

Closing Prayer

Thank You, Lord, for the peace that we come to in You. That in You, Jesus, we find rest and are stabilized. And Your peace can be a sword and threat for a world that is accustomed to unrest, fear, and exploitation. Help us to lean into Your love when we feel anxious and upset, and to abide in Your love, where we experience calm. Then, we are changed. In Jesus' name, Amen.

2025 ADVENT DAY TWENTY-FIVE

December 9

Scripture Reading: Romans 12:1-5

"The Lord does not look at the things people look at. People look at the outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart." 1 Samuel 16:7

Gipp's Ramblings Number 415, 1984

Old Bert knew it was Christmas. Not by the songs or the lights or the smell of pine and spruce, but by the goodwill of people.

Where so often he met frowns because of his condition, he now met smiles of kindness and caring, an extra coin, a free cup of coffee.

This was the only time that old Bert didn't drink. His gift to the tiny Child. No one was aware of this but Bert and God, but it didn't really matter that others didn't know. God knew, and that was enough. Transient can be felt as an unkind designation at Christmas, yet in this time, Bert is a non-specifically destinationed individual; but he is alive in humility and adoration. Like the shepherds who had left their flocks in search of the stable, he had left his bottle of booze in search of the same, and he found the Christ Child in people's hearts.

Bert was a happy man; rejection did not concern him, and he was not shunned or despised by people, for he was a friend of the Prince—the Prince of Peace, who takes away the sins of the world.

So, he nodded his Christmas greetings, smiled at the wonder of divine forgiveness, bathed in the meaning of the season—and in his own way, found the Christ Child in life and quietly adored Him

I'm Gipp Forster, and I'm a street pastor. From the Mustard Seed to you, a very Merry Christmas.

Going Deeper

- It is made clear for us in the words that our Lord shared with Samuel who was looking for the king (1 Samuel 16), that God sees differently than we do. Can we seek to see the world and one another, as the Creator of all does?
- The character of this rambling, Bert, gives his attention to the birth of our Saviour on Christmas Day. How does his way of reverence for Jesus at this time of year speak to you?
- It is not difficult to judge. Perhaps, the invitation at this time of year, and in every opportunity, is to perceive the goodness in one another. How can we expand on these Christmas sentiments between us, of loving acceptance, beyond Christmas time?

Closing Prayer

Thank You, Jesus, that by Your Spirit we can learn Your way of being in the world, the life of love that we are originally intended for. Help us to look for the goodness in one another; help us to encourage one another toward You, by Your love. Your perfect love overwhelms all the fears the world can muster and invites us into newness, resurrection life found only in You.

In Jesus' name, amen.

2025 ADVENT DAY TWENTY-SIX

December 10

Scripture Reading: Mark 4:35-41

"Jesus was in the stern, sleeping on a cushion. The disciples woke him and said to him, 'Teacher, don't you care if we drown?' He got up, rebuked the wind and said to the waves, 'Quiet! Be still!' Then the wind died down and it was completely calm." Mark 4:38-39

Gipp's Ramblings Number 250, 1984

We live in a world of haste, a demanding world that insists on travelling in the fast lane. I am told that no matter how severe a storm is on the ocean, no matter how high and turbulent the waves, one hundred feet down, the water is perfectly calm. There is a quietude in the depths that no surface storms can disturb.

The world is like a stormy sea, and we, in our permissive progress, are tossed about like bobbing corks by the high breakers. We cry out in panic and alarm, "Save me lest I drown," and cling desperately to the fragmented boards of so many of our broken dreams. But in human lives, there too can be serenity and peace, undisturbed quiet, safe from the storms of the world.

We must go deeper than the surface noises and touch the solitude of things that do not blare or dance or sing or threaten or maim. We must touch the unseen with our untried fingers and allow our minds to dance in gardens without neon and mortar and rest beside pools that are not artificial and counterfeit. The garden where God lives.

I see so many people who appear serene and unruffled by the noise and confusion around them, almost like ducks gliding across a smooth pond. Once again, I am reminded that beneath the water, their little feet are pumping like crazy, and the unseen is not as calm as the seen. But we can reverse that and go to the depths of peace if we do not weary of the search. When God is ignored, often peace is unlearned.

I'm Gipp Forster of the Mustard Seed... I'm a street pastor.

Going Deeper

- Moments for reflection can open for us throughout the day like windows of quiet time, and they can feel brief and fleeting, so much so that we might not give them much notice. What does it feel like for you to feel rushed and busy?
- Going deeper calls for presence of mind and slowing our busy selves down a bit. What does it look like for you, and how might it feel to those around you, when you decide to slow down a bit to go a bit deeper with yourself, with people you care for, and with priorities?
- Gipp closes this rambling with the statement: "When God is ignored, often peace is unlearned." Listening to God, and the leading of His Spirit, will draw us closer into the way of Jesus Christ and a deeper sense of His peace. How can you practice stillness with Him in your life?

Closing Prayer

God, thank You for the life of peace that You have invited us into through Your Son, Jesus. Help us to be mindful of You this Christmas time, and to slow down a bit to remember the gift of peace that You have for us. Also, Lord, help us to be mindful toward stillness, apart from the rush-of-things, in order to offer one another our undivided presence and care. Thank You, Jesus, for showing us the way to loving one another, and to peace. Amen.

2025 ADVENT DAY TWENTY-SEVEN

December 11

Scripture Reading: Romans 8:31-39

"For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord." Romans 8:38-39

Gipp's Ramblings Number 213, 1985

"I am Scrooge!" he thought, as he chased the children away from his door. "Ebenezer has nothing over me!" He huddled down once more before his sparse fire, warming his hands around his cup of hot water. The mementos, the memories, that gathered dust around him stared from the cold shadows, trying to draw him back to other years, when he was younger, and when he was young. When life and people were not enemies.

He sat as if made of granite, his chiselled features frozen in a bitter frown, his lips a slash across parched skin, lined with the scars of secret battles. He sat alone, staring into the fire. There was no quiet, no festive music. No Christmas tree or decoration, no gift, brightly wrapped to tease the senses. Only this old man, and a dwindling fire, and a multitude of loneliness!

Like Ebenezer, he was surrounded by his ghosts, of the past, of the present, of the future. A photograph of a young, attractive woman, sitting on an ancient table, seemed to plead with him, to reconsider the "once was" and the "still to be." But his thoughts were spoiled, rotted away by bitterness and self-pity, refusing all entrance to that of the gentle and patient.

And the snow blew outside his abode as children with red and chapped cheeks sang of a child born in a manger. And the Spirit of Christmas stood at his door knocking, knocking, knocking. But there was no answer, and the hands of healing froze in the crystal air!

I'm Gipp Forster of the Mustard Seed. I'm a Street Pastor.

Going Deeper

- Difficult days can make us cold. Some can mask well the sadness and resentment that builds up through tough days, and impossibly long seasons of sorrow and loneliness in our lives. Can you imagine what it might feel like to be as cold as Scrooge and what has made him so?
- Scriptures declare God to be close to the broken-hearted (Psalm 34:1). Yet, evidence of this sometimes seems elusive, because those who are experiencing the most sorrow seem to keep their hearts from opening to His consolation. Why is this? Does God ever give up on us?
- We may know of some people in our lives who have lost hope, who have become disbelieving to anything of promise, and isolating in fear from the world. How can we draw closer to the broken and lonely in our families, and those grieving on the streets of our cities, this Christmas?

Closing Prayer

Thank You, Lord, for Your love that has come to us. Thank You for loving us resiliently, that Your love for us is not dependant on our love for You. When we have been so hurt through our respective journey in life, and our hearts can become cold, You keep coming back to us; Your Love never ever gives up on us. Lord, soften our hearts and open our hearts. Help us to see the part that we can play this Christmas as people of Your love in our families and throughout our cities. In Jesus' name, amen.

2025 ADVENT DAY TWENTY-EIGHT

December 12

Scripture Reading: Philippians 4:4-9

*"Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice! Let your gentleness be evident to all. The Lord is near."
Philippians 4:4-5*

Gipp's Ramblings Number 418, 1984

The snowflakes fall, like gentle fingers on the eyelids of the world. The distant sound of Christmas music dances across the heart to awaken memories to greet the season.

Salvation Army bands now seem to burst forth in new and meaningful colour, while children's eyes seem to grow twice their size. Smiles are more readily given, while charity yawns and reawakens to its moment of truth. Bells jangle, trees adorned with artificial splendour almost seem to sing, while white, red and green predominate over other colours in these moments of awe and wonder.

Department store windows breathe, and peppermint sticks drip from counters in wonderful profusion. Even the toys smile, and young choirs recite that which brings joy.

The air is filled with the wonder of magic as adults hide, with a gentle smile, that same wonder of yesteryears and pretend with their children.

It is Christmas, and its truth of goodwill and peace on earth, is coaxed from most hearts in its true and unending message. Christ is born, and recognized or unrecognized, the Spirit is alive, as hearts open to the season, and human is at peace with human.

I'm Gipp Forster, and I'm a street pastor. From the Mustard Seed to you, a very Merry Christmas.

Going Deeper

- Could it be that all of creation leans a bit closer into the peace of God during the season of Christmas, when we are celebrating the coming of our Redeemer, the One through whom all things have been made, Jesus Christ (Jn. 1:3). How do you experience feelings of peace at this time of year?
- The world is going through a lot of unrest and confusion; the pain of war and poverty of all kinds can be found in every direction. Is peace on earth even possible with mankind? If you believe so, then how can it come to be?
- Jesus Christ has been born into this world. He lived in full cooperation, uninterrupted connection with Abba-God and His love for the world was relentless, death couldn't even stand in the way. The gift of Christmas is the celebration of His coming into the world. How do you see the Spirit of Christmas, recognized or not, come to life in the world?

Closing Prayer

Thank You, Lord, that through You our vision for the world can shift in ways to see Your loving presence, and to know that Your hope has come. You change our lives, and You bring peace to our unrest, when we come to You. Thank You for the ways that You come to us, and though it may seem that the world is tangling up worse by-the-day, we trust that through Your unconquerable love all things becoming new. In Jesus' name, amen.

2025 ADVENT DAY TWENTY-NINE

December 13

Scripture Reading: John 10:1-18

"Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid." John 14:27

Gipp's Ramblings Number 69, 1986

How still it was that Christmas of 1943. I was only six, and war was a word I was growing up with. It was as much a part of the world to me as was Christmas. The Christmas tree was sparse, the mood subdued and quiet, and my uncle and grandmother pressed close to a radio to listen to the voice of Walter Winchell. My uncle's sock ring on a fireless hearth, gifts in plain green or brown wrapping paper, placed carefully under a skeletal-like tree with a few ribbons and baubles on it.

The tide was beginning to change in Europe, but that meant little to a six-year-old boy who listened for Santa Claus and not to "Mr. and Mrs. America and all the ships at sea!" There was little peace on earth then, but neighbours drew closer to neighbours, and treats were found in an orange, if one could be found, a small handful of rock candy, a few nuts, and a wind-up toy, with a victory bond stamp stuck to the bottom of it.

People down the street had lost a son in the Pacific, another family, a son in Europe, and God, a son in Jerusalem. It was hard to celebrate life with so many young lives being lost daily, to remember a child born in Bethlehem who was called the Prince of Peace. But we did.

We opened our meagre gifts on Christmas morning and pretended a joy we didn't feel. And I remember it so well, the sadness of it, and yet the camaraderie of one common concern of a people in turmoil. The war would last another two years, and I would lose my uncle and be moved to another country.

But Christmases would come, and Christmases would go. War would become more subtle, and each year, a baby would cry out for peace on earth, goodwill to men. He still cries out! I pray that this year, we will hear Him and appreciate the joy of that peace.

I'm Gipp Forster of the Mustard Seed. I'm a street pastor.

Going Deeper

- The celebration of Christmas seems to be far enough apart from year-to-year that it can still be experienced freshly. Yet, as we get older, does some of the magic disappear? In what ways has Christmas changed for you over the years?
- War is far more prevalent today around the world than it was in the mid 1900s. Where there is peace, countries offering safer spaces, many are finding refuge and facing the battle of displacement and starting again in an unknown culture. How can we pray for this world-at-war, and how can we be people of hospitality for those finding refuge in our safer spaces?
- War is subtle. There is a battle that so many face in our community, the battle-for-survival that poverty poses, the wars waged within that create mental and emotional unrest, the battles of addiction. These wars become excruciatingly obvious on the streets of our cities. How can we pray and express relief for those experiencing the oppression and torment of these battles?
- Why did God send us His Son, Jesus?

Closing Prayer

Thank You, Jesus, for being the Way, the Truth and the Life. Thank You, that You came because of God's love for the world; we need a Saviour. Lord, give us Your heart and vision for the world; help us to listen for Your leading expressing Your love for those who are new to our communities and feeling displaced in our cities, those who are feeling stuck at war within, and those who are fighting battles of survival with poverty. May Your presence, Immanuel, be known in us, the solidarity of heaven in every community with those in chains-outcast, broken-sick, and hungry-in-need. In Jesus' name, amen.

2025 ADVENT DAY THIRTY

December 14

Scripture Reading: Psalm 121

"I lift up my eyes to the mountains—where does my help come from? My help comes from the LORD, the Maker of heaven and earth." Psalm 121:1-2

Gipp's Ramblings Number 417, 1984

The old man huddled close to the fire, the blanket snuggled closely to weary legs. The music of Christmas, sung to him softly and sweetly from the small radio that was his only companion.

His eighty-seven years sat in silent contemplation at his feet and reminisced with him of other times and other Christmases. His eyes danced in those decorated halls of memory. The long-ago laughter reverberated in its corridors, and the aroma of an old kitchen caused his lips to turn in a gentle smile.

The little tree on the table, with its one set of lights, and five tears of tinsel, blinked at him and shared with him the joy of this quiet season. His gnarled hands held a single card, an ancient card, when youth was young, and tomorrow was a promise and not a threat. No gift rested beneath his small tree save that of a tiny plaster manger surrounded by shepherds, sheep, kings and cows, a donkey and God.

His memory warmed him, and as the small radio sang to him: "Hark the herald angels sing," he bowed his head reverently and paid homage to the newborn King, and then he slept, so that memory might hold him and take him to a time when there was people and love's legs were strong, and joy was shared in the hallowed halls of yesterday.

I'm Gipp Forster, and I'm a street pastor from the Mustard Seed. To you, a very Merry Christmas.

Going Deeper

- Looking back on our lives and looking closely at some of the deeply connected moments that have become memories for us, we can perceive the presence and closeness of God. Can we become more intentional with our presence to "Go" this year into our gatherings and services, our dinners and outreaches, with the expectation of meeting with God?
- Gipp's aim with this rambling seems to be set toward finding beauty in the little things of Christmases gone-by. Remembering all that we are thankful for, the goodness of God in our lives, can help us to persevere through some of the tough times that we face. How can we find strength to endure Christmas, if Christmas holds difficult memories for us?
- There is a gift of love that has reached out to us from eternity; this love doesn't shy away but endures with us, even through our most difficult moments. How can you imagine sharing this love of God, who is Jesus Christ, with those near to you who are experiencing loneliness and in need of some consolation, even this hope of heaven, this Christmas?

Closing Prayer

Thank You, Lord, for giving us all that we need. That we have been given good memories, wonderful moments and people we can be thankful for. Help us when it becomes tough to remember Your blessings for the heaviness of unbearable and present suffering. Come and hold our hearts when we feel painful memories arise, or we are facing a struggle in our lives that seek our attention. Help us to remember the gift of Your Love who is with us, even within us. May Your peace reign in us, Lord; Spirit of God fill us with Your calm and rest. In Jesus' name, amen.

2025 ADVENT DAY THIRTY-ONE

December 15

Scripture Reading: Matthew 19:16-26

“As Jesus looked up, He saw the rich putting their gifts into the temple treasury. He also saw a poor widow put in two very small copper coins. ‘Truly I tell you,’ He said, ‘This poor widow has put in more than all the others.’”

Luke 21:1-3

Gipp’s Ramblings Number 403, 1984

I like to wander back into a Dickens' Christmas and see old Bob Cratchit and Tiny Tim embracing joy in their joyless world.

I like to walk those streets of old architecture amidst falling snow while children sing Christmas carols, and I like to look for the Ghost of Jacob Marley in a door knocker.

To allow the Ghost of Christmas Present to introduce me to Alice Ebenezer Scrooge's love in youth, as she ministers to the poor. An old Ebenezer himself with his “Bah, humbug” and his bowl of gruel, as he says, “No more bread” because it costs an extra halfpenny. And the Ghost of Christmas Past with his bag of memories to remind us that life is not only business but love and sharing, laughing, and caring. Old Fezziwig dances with Mrs. Fezziwig while the fiddle plays its melody to bring joy to all humanity.

Scrooge was given a second chance to bring happiness into others’ lives. Perhaps we are given a second chance, too, as we behold Dickens’ beloved *Christmas Carol*. A second chance to care to bring joy into a stranger’s life, to follow in the footsteps of Fezziwig and Bob Cratchit, and even Ebenezer Scrooge.

To share with the less fortunate and take the time to care. And we at the Mustard Seed share with a little crippled boy and say what he said to all, “God bless us... everyone.”

I'm Gipp Forster of the Mustard Seed. I'm a street pastor.

Going Deeper

- There are people in the cities where we live who hold most of the wealth. Some are open to share a little of what they have. Why does it seem so difficult for those who have a lot of money and resources to share more of what they have with those in need?
- Sometimes, an inspiration arises within us like the awakening of a still small voice, inviting a response to a need that we are presented with. We can be quick to satisfy our own needs. How do we respond when we can make a little or big difference in the life of our neighbour in need?
- Jesus shows us the way of compassion, and joy in “giving all” (Heb. 12:2), and being our example of going the extra mile when only one is thought enough (Matt. 5:41). Why did Jesus say that the two coins the widow gave was more than all the riches of the wealthy?

Closing Prayer

Thank you, God, for showing us the way of heaven through Your Son, Jesus. In Him we learn of true compassion and generosity. When we feel like something is more important to hold onto, we can know, if we are willing, that this can be a sign for us to come, to listen, and to trust You, for all to-being-with and in-the-end is Yours, Lord. Yes, Your encouragement is for us to seek first the kingdom of heaven. Jesus, thank You for living out the love of God, which makes all things new, and that opens us to abundant life and peace that passes understanding, Amen.

2025 ADVENT DAY THIRTY-TWO

December 16

Scripture Reading: John 14:23-27

"Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid." John 14:27

Gipp's Ramblings Number 416, 1984

Christmas reminds me of dad's socks tacked to a mantel, of tangerines, delicious apples, nuts, and hard candy. It reminds me of colour, of sweet singing, of incredible magic when smiles were normally found on frowning faces, of trees gaily dressed in popcorn and lights and baubles, and snowmen, and stars. It reminds me of cold and warmth both huddled together on a snow-filled night, and the smell of turkey cooking and surprises hidden beneath ribbon and wrapping paper.

It reminds me of a stable and a child, of angels singing, and shepherds leaving their flocks to stand in quiet adoration, of splended kings, of animals, and the smell of hay.

Christmas brings peace to my heart and allows it to open to a stranger and a friend. "Silent Night" still totally enthralls me, as unused tears uncontrollably dance down my aging cheeks.

I don't want it to end. I don't want it to vanish. I don't want to wait so long for it to visit again. And though we vanquish it after we have used it, it still sings in my heart, and I know it is only as far as I want to reach.

May Christmas bless you as it does me throughout your whole life, and may you find joy in its meaning. I'm Gipp Forster, and I'm a street pastor. From the Mustard Seed to you, a very Merry Christmas.

Going Deeper

- Memories of Christmas are unique for each one of us. This time of year opens us to the wonder of generosity; our senses can be heightened, even expectant, as we look for the presence of God's original goodness coming to us. What good memories do you have of Christmas?
- A song is mentioned in this rambling as having a profound impact for Gipp: "Silent Night." Is there a particular Christmas song that opens your heart, and creates wonderful feelings of deeper connection within you?
- There is an end to Christmas each year. Can you identify with Gipp's feelings of not wanting for the Christmas season to leave? Have you ever experienced the presence or spirit of Christmas at another time of year?

Closing Prayer

Thank you, God, for the good memories of this time of year from our lives, that are with us to reflect on especially during this time of year. These memories can be gifts for us when we are reminded of them. And, Lord, there may be some more upsetting memories that dawn on us, and with these, help us to be gentle with ourselves, entrusting them with you. Guard our hearts, Lord, and open us, in all ways, to Your faithfulness and loving Presence.

In Jesus' name, Amen.

2025 ADVENT DAY THIRTY-THREE

December 17

Scripture Reading: Psalm 8

"When I consider Your heavens, the work of Your fingers, the moon and the stars, which You have ordained, what is man that You are mindful of him, and the son of man that You visit him? For You have made him a little lower than the angels, and You have crowned him with glory and honor." Psalm 8:3-5

Gipp's Ramblings Number 32, 1984

I saw a star the other night. It wasn't an ordinary star as stars go. It was huge and seemed to stand out in front of the rest, and it was almost like it was beckoning each of us to follow. I wondered if it were the same Bethlehem star that called to humankind of the birth of a child 2,000 years ago.

My heart knew a sudden peace, and for a moment, I put aside my own personal problems and took time to slow down and wonder. Why do we think ourselves so wonderful? Why do we think we control power and dictate to God our demands? Do we think that God can be usurped and our wisdom cancel His plans for our world in rebellion?

Evolution as a debate seemed so minute as I stared at the star. I was in awe and felt so small in the scope of creation. I felt so glad to be a part of so magnificent a plan. God is so much bigger than our thoughts. His way is not our way, nor His thoughts our thoughts. We cannot bring Him to our level, no matter how wise we think we are.

And that's what the star reminds me of! God's sovereignty, His lordship, His creation. And though tiny and minute, I was a part of it. Maybe you have seen the star and maybe it told of a manger of a magnificent God of creation that stills all questions...I was glad to be alive and that God was my Father.

I'm Gipp Forster of the Mustard Seed. I'm a street pastor.

Going Deeper

- Our minds can try to fathom God. We can try to imagine His dimensions in all kinds of ways, and we can try to define His wild magnificence, and we will ultimately succumb to awe and wonder. How has the matchless greatness of God met with you? Try to define the meaning of this moment.
- Describing the Presence of God can be a challenge, and there are scriptures that can be helpful in this way. Gipp describes His feeling of God's Presence as "a sudden peace." When the nearness of Christ has felt closer-by for you, how can you describe the feeling of His presence?
- The star of Bethlehem is given new light in this rambling as something small, yet representative of something unfathomably large, and an event unfolding that would impact all of history. How do you think God sees you as a part of it all?

Closing Prayer

God, thank You for Your love, and that Your eternal love has a matchless precision to it, meeting with us each uniquely. Thank You for giving us opportunity to catch glimpses of Your goodness through the wonders of creation, that we are included in it, and even of Your eternal presence through the life of Your Son, Jesus. Thank You for drawing near to us, for our coming alive to Your eternal presence through the Your Spirit within us; may we continue to draw nearer to You this day. In Jesus' name, amen.

2025 ADVENT DAY THIRTY-FOUR

December 18

Scripture Reading: Matthew 7:1-12

"Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives; the one who seeks finds; and to the one who knocks, the door will be opened." Matthew 7:7-8

Gipp's Ramblings Number 207, 1985

I went in search of a stable last night. I didn't go into the countryside or down along country roads or out where the meadow touches the forests. I went into the heart of the city on wet pavement amidst hissing tires past department store windows, bragging of their splendour down back alleys strewn with garbage and waste.

I asked a woman I passed by if she had seen a man and a young pregnant girl searching for lodging. She told me no, followed me along in curiosity for a moment, then drifted away back into the shadows. I also asked the same question to a group of youths on a corner, but they shrugged with indifference and looked at me strangely. I found a wanderer in a doorway, and he told me he could take me to them for a bottle of wine but then burst into a rowdy sailor's song and shuffled off down the street accompanied by his invisible ghost. I stopped a businessman, but before I could ask my question, he fearfully pushed a dollar at me and then hurried away quickly.

I never did find the stable out there where concrete and neon dance to a hidden drummer. But I know that somewhere in the city, a man and his young wife seek it, too—a simple place to lay their head and to bring forth a child who, in later years, will also search for comfort and a place to lay his head in the haste of man's panic. But perhaps tonight I will go in search again. And if I should find them with their child, I will bow down and worship Him. For He is Christ the Lord and worthy of our praise!

I'm Gipp Forster of the Mustard Seed. I'm a Street Pastor.

Going Deeper

- Gipp speaks of a search for Christ, even the birth of Jesus, believing to find Him somewhere in the city. Why do you think the inner-city is where he goes to find Him?
- There is so much to do at Christmas time. We can become quite busy with the rush of things-to-do, people-to-see, and places-to-go. What do you think about going on a search for Jesus this year? Where would you go to find Him? What does that journey look like for you?
- What do you think the response of most people would be if you were to walk around asking the question, "Where can I find Jesus?"

Closing Prayer

Thank you, Lord, for the meeting-point between heaven and earth that You have given to us in your one and only Son, Jesus. Let the curiosity arise within us as to where He might be, and that as we go looking for Him this Christmas time, we would find Him in most surprising ways that would enlighten our love for You and deepen our love for one another. In Jesus' name, Amen.

2025 ADVENT DAY THIRTY-FIVE

December 19

Scripture Reading: Matthew 11:28-30

“Then Isaiah said, ‘Hear now, you house of David! Is it not enough to try the patience of humans? Will you try the patience of my God also? Therefore, the Lord himself will give you a sign: The virgin will conceive and give birth to a son and will call him Immanuel.’” Isaiah 7:13-14

Gipp’s Ramblings Number 101, 1985

It was only a stuffed toy. A bedraggled, beaten-up, old, comical dog with a sad expression which had seen better days. His ear was torn, his tail ripped off, and his legs broken. But he had something special about him, something that said, “I’ve still got love left in me...I’m still huggable.”

The others wanted to throw him away, and when they weren’t looking, I quietly took him aside and put him high up on my bookshelf where others would not notice him. I thought of him as a special toy for a special child, although I didn’t know who that child would be.

I finally did a sermon about him, called “The Toy That No One Wanted,” using him as the example of the Christ Child that the world didn’t seem to want. Towards the end of the sermon, I saw the special child in the congregation. There were tears in his eyes, and he looked with true affection on the broken old toy, like he was no stranger to brokenness himself. A special child sees the unseen as well as the seen, knows tears when there isn’t any crying.

At the end of the sermon, I held up the toy and pretended it was him speaking. It said, “Is there anyone out there who will take me to their heart and love me?” This special child leapt from his chair with tears streaming down his cheeks and took the toy from me. His name was Peter, and he was forty-two years old with a special feeling for a very special toy.

I’m Gipp Forster of the Mustard Seed. I’m a street pastor.

Going Deeper

- God comes for those He loves, ‘for God so loved the world’ (John 3:16), and His Presence with us is made known. Take a moment to recall the way that He came to you, the way that the Person of Jesus Christ made His Living Presence known to you.
- So, when are we too old to be a kid? Remember, Jesus said that “unless you change and become like little children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven.” Matthew 18:3. Perhaps, the best examples we have of the Christ-like life are children of all ages.
- Sometimes, for all the busyness of life, we can miss His Presence. How can we become more attentive today, in our curious expectation of His Presence, of Immanuel-God who is with us?

Closing Prayer

Thank You, Lord Jesus, for Your Love for us, and that You have come to be with us, to meet with us. As You wait for us to turn in such a way that we catch a glimpse of You, Spirit of God prepare our hearts. When we see You Lord, may there then not be a quick turning back into the busyness of things, but an embrace with You, our undivided attention toward You, like a “Homeful moment”—and may we be willing to remain there awhile with You, who never leaves us. Amen.

2025 ADVENT DAY THIRTY-SIX

December 20

Scripture Reading: Isaiah 53

“Surely, He took up our pain and bore our suffering, yet we considered Him punished by God, stricken by Him, and afflicted. But He was pierced for our transgressions, He was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was on Him, and by His wounds we are healed.” Isaiah 53:4-5

Gipp's Ramblings Number 419, 1984

The old man came with the broken old watch, and his tattered clothes, and knelt down before the life-sized manger scene in the department store window. The streets were almost deserted, the night was cold, and goodwill to men was safely celebrated behind closed doors.

The tears on his aged cheeks slowly criss-crossed through the stubble and gathered at the corners of his nearly blue lips. The glass-encased scene before him shone with overhead lights, and the wax baby gazed intently at the unexpected visitor.

The old man raised the ancient watch in trembling hands as if to give it to the wax child, and it clunked as it hit the glass of the protected scene. He mumbled words, but they were not recorded, then lay the broken relic on the pavement below the glass. He took a half-empty bottle and placed it beside it.

It seemed he prayed for a moment then stood trembling and stumbled into the shadows to be swallowed by the quiet.

It was then that the wax baby seemed to move. It was then that a tear escaped from the glass eye, and the little wax lips seemed to smile. But it wasn't until two days later that the janitor found an old broken watch in the tiny wax hand of the wax child in the wooden manger in a department store window.

I'm Gipp Forster, and I'm a street pastor. From the Mustard Seed to you, a very Merry Christmas!

Going Deeper

- Christmas is a magical time of year. We can feel the presence of Christmas through the songs we sing, the puzzles we labour on that come to life, all the sights and smells. How does the scene that Gipp paints with his words make you feel? How do you find yourself connecting with it?
- Authenticity can be elusive in the world of masks and games, and when we come to Christ can we come to a moment when we can let our guard down and open to be the person we were made to be. In this rambling, how did the unfolding of something inanimate turning real speak to you?
- What do you feel is the meaning of the tear and the smile of the wax child in Gipp's rambling?

Closing Prayer

Thank You, Jesus for showing us the way of true authenticity, that as we follow You, there would be a feeling of peace as we live into the people You've made us to be—even the community, the Church we are called to be. Help us closer to ourselves and one another, Lord, that Your love would breakthrough. Even this Christmas, as we celebrate Your arrival into the world, that through us Your life-giving Presence would breakthrough once again. In Jesus' name, amen.

2025 ADVENT DAY THIRTY-SEVEN

December 21

Scripture Reading: John 3:1-20

"For God so loved the world that He gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have eternal life." John 3:16

Gipp's Ramblings, 1986: "The Christmas Spirit"

I am the Christmas Spirit!

I enter the home of poverty and cause the eyes of children to open in pleasing wonder. I cause the miser's clutched hand to relax, and in so doing, paint a bright spot in his soul.

I cause the aged to renew their youth and to laugh as they used to, and not as they pretend. I bring romance to the heart of childhood and brighten sleep with dreams woven of magic. I coax eager feet to climb dark stairways with bulging stockings of treats that young hearts might be amazed at the goodness of the world.

I call to the prodigal to pause a moment in his wild and wasteful way and to nurse the warm tears of memory that love stirs within his soul, and his eyes for a moment are cast homeward. I walk within dark prison cells, touching the scars of mankind, pointing forward to good and honest days to come for those who would have their hearts healed.

I come softly to the home of pain, touching gentle lips that are too weak to speak but tremble in silent gratitude. I walk the streets of each city and town in search of the lost and lonely, calling them to a manger in a humble stable that the warmth of meaning might engulf their souls.

I am a thousand faces in a thousand thoughts, coaxing a weary world to look up into the face of God, if only for a second, forgetting that of the past, that "now" might be present in their hearts. I am love! I am peace! I am joy! I am brightly wrapped in the ribbons of memory and promise. I am the Christmas Spirit!

Going Deeper

- The Christmas Spirit can affect each of us uniquely. In what ways do the Holy Spirit come alive to you at this time of year that we celebrate the birth of our Saviour Jesus Christ?
- Can you go even deeper with a specific aspect of the Christmas Spirit that Gipp presents in this rambling? Choose something that stands out for you and imagine further into it.
- There is connection with the Christmas Spirit and the Person of Christ Jesus. Can you identify such presence impacting creation and lives throughout scripture? Try to connect an aspect of the Christmas Spirit included here with a scripture or story from the Bible.

Closing Prayer

Holy Spirit, One of the Three-in-One, present with us and in us, thank You for the joyful experience of Your nearness as we celebrate the birth of Jesus, the Messiah, Saviour of the world. May our lives this Christmas time resemble our professed love for You, may Your leading in our lives resound with celebration for Your incarnation, and may Your presence be felt in us celebrating our Lord and Saviour. In the name above all names, Jesus, we pray.

Amen.

2025 ADVENT DAY THIRTY-EIGHT

December 22

Scripture Reading: Hebrews 4:1-13

"For the word of God is alive and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart. Nothing in all creation is hidden from God's sight. Everything is uncovered and laid bare before the eyes of Him to whom we must give account."

Hebrews 4:12

Gipp's Ramblings, Number 6, 1983

When Harry C. told me he would receive nothing for Christmas, the "Merry" suddenly went out of Christmas, and the season lost its smile.

I looked at his ragged clothes, his week's stubble of beard, his tattered shoes, and matted hair. I wanted to get away but didn't know how to do it politely.

"It ain't real, you know!" he said.

"What isn't?" I mumbled, looking for escape.

"Christmas," he said, "Christmas ain't real."

"Why?" I asked, knowing his answer and not wanting to hear it.

"Because the baby Jesus ain't a part of it," Harry C. said sadly. "Nobody really cares... and if they do, it's only for those they know."

For about five minutes, I tried to defend my cloistered Christmas, but Harry C. wasn't buying it. Finally, I found an excuse that opened the door to escape, and I moved away. From a safe distance, I watched Harry shuffle down the street, dejected, bitter, and alone.

I imagined he carried a child, a child that no one wanted, a child named Jesus. I wanted to call out, but I didn't. Soon Harry and the child were swallowed by the crowd.

I knew they would find a doorway or an alley or a shed to wait out Christmas. I went home to clean sheets and a turkey dinner, but as much as I wanted it to, it didn't taste like Christmas.

My name is Gipp Forster. I am a street pastor.

2025 ADVENT DAY THIRTY-EIGHT *CONTINUED*

December 22

Going Deeper

- Sometimes, it can be difficult to understand what the Bible is saying and to find connection with it in our lives. Have you experienced God's Word as living and active in your life, and how can we practice seeing the Word of God alive in the world around us?
- Many of Gipp's ramblings were written with intention to spark the imagination of Christ alive, Immanuel-God with us. Vision for the Living Word can inspire us and keep us searching and curious for His Presence in all things. Like the character of this rambling who was observed as the one carrying the Christ Child, can we imagine those carrying Him as those who are broken, outcast, oppressed in ways? Can we imagine our being carried by Him this Christmas?
- Have you caught a glimpse of our Living Lord in some way already this Christmas season? Take a minute to look back and with some acuteness over the last few days or weeks to find Him there and alive with you, arising within you.

Closing Prayer

Lord Jesus, thank you for coming to Life with us and within us. Thank You, that we can see You alive in our midst, Lord of creation alive and with us. Help us to see You closer to the broken-hearted, inspiring us to come even closer to catch a glimpse of You as being held by those who are experiencing oppression of various kinds. May we know what it means to hold and be held by You, this Christmas, drawing us ever closer to Your love for us.

In Jesus' name, amen.

2025 ADVENT DAY THIRTY-NINE

December 23

Scripture Reading: Isaiah 40:21-31

"But those who hope in the Lord will renew their strength. They will soar on wings like eagles; they will run and not grow weary; they will walk and not be faint." Isaiah 40:31

Gipp's Ramblings, Number 208, 1985

Tonight, I would like to tell you the story of an empty stocking. It hangs in the corridors of history amidst the portraits of great men and their achievements, it hangs hidden in the shadow of war and progress in the dusty alcoves of challenge that were met in bloodshed on the fields of man's endeavour.

This empty stocking originated in a long-ago place in the very heart of history when occupation and rebellion sought their own justice in the hearts of men and tore freedom into a many-faceted flag. It originated in a stable amidst the excrement of domesticated beasts and the smell of warm hay.

It was empty on that night of nights because mankind could find no room for the thought of God, and it has remained empty over these many, many years as gaudy celebration has competed with its simplicity in the hallowed halls of memory. It hangs waiting to be filled with thanksgiving, with gratitude, with the quiet celebration of reconciliation. It waits to be filled with peace on earth... and goodwill to men. Each year, we come close to it but somehow bypass it in our plastic gaiety. We can buy nothing to put in it or ever make something that would cause it to bulge.

It waits for you and it waits for me to fill it with our concern for others, whether it be a stranger or a friend. It waits for the peace of nations and the peace of individuals. It waits in a stable above the head of a child in the corridors of the past, the present, and the future. It waits even beyond Christmas!

Going Deeper

- Everyday we are on a search for things to fill us up, and everyday we find ourselves in some ways fulfilled and in others lacking. What does emptiness feel like to you?
- There are times that emptiness can happen to us on a social level, personal level, and spiritual level. What kinds of things cause emptiness in us? Take a minute to describe the origin of these things and how they are given space to root in our lives.
- God's intention is that we experience life more abundantly, and at Christmas both emptiness and completeness can be felt as slightly more immanent; and the gift of God is that we can find Home and Rest His Love. What is it about Jesus that nurtures our completeness, wholeness, fulfilment?

Closing Prayer

Creator of all, thank You for caring for us and providing for all of our needs. Keep our focus on You, believing that what You have given is sufficient. Open my heart, Lord, to catch a vision for ways that I can help others. Thank You God, for showing us the way of Love, or selfless generosity, through Your Son, Jesus. Amen.

2025 ADVENT DAY FORTY

December 24

Scripture Reading: Luke 2:1-21

"But the angel said to them, 'Do not be afraid. I bring you good news that will cause great joy for all the people. Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; He is the Messiah, the Lord.'" Luke 2:10-11

Gipp's Ramblings, 1985: "Who is this Child?"

Who is this Child lying so quietly in an animal trough in the coolness of a stable? Who is this Child who looks unblinkingly into the invisible distance of the future to a lonely hill called Golgotha?

His name is Jesus, and He is the Son of God!

He lies exposed to the cruelty and indifference of this world, and yet He makes no sound and issues forth no complaint. He has left His throne in glory, His position and splendour, His majesty and honour to be born into humble circumstances and to be welcomed by simple men of this earth who seek no favour but to gaze upon Him.

The distant drums call Him to ridicule and accusations, to privation and loneliness, to a wooden tower raised above the gaze of humans.

He will be called an impostor, an anarchist, a deceiver and a wastrel, and yet will not open His mouth to defend himself. He will lose His reputation and find nowhere in this world to lay His head. He shall know physical and mental anguish and the agony of His Spirit shall go unheard save in the ears of God.

His friends will betray Him, deny Him and forsake Him, and His gift of utter self-sacrifice shall go unnoticed in the spilling of His own blood. In His innocence, He will make no stand against His accusers.

For thirty-three years He shall walk in the world, amongst His creation, amongst us, sharing our burdens, seeking no honours, writing no books, loving the simple, telling the stories of love and of a place that is far greater than this world.

From His humble origin He shall walk a humble path teaching humble people of the humility of God. Destiny shall guide Him from this tiny manger to that wooden cross.

Misunderstood, unwanted for Himself, unacceptable in our realms of confusion He shall wind His way through degradation and shame, ridicule and weariness, forsaken and rejected of man...

Who is this Child?

He is the Christ Child, who will end His journey much as He begins it, unheralded and unwanted. But His is the victory and His is the triumph, for by His sacrifice we can know salvation, and by His stripes we can be healed.

Who is Jesus?

He is the gift of God given to a world in turmoil, unfettered in a manger beneath the shadow of a cross. Come, let us adore Him!

2025 ADVENT DAY FORTY CONTINUED

December 24

Going Deeper

- It is Christmas Eve, and the 40th day of this Celtic Advent devotional series. How are you feeling following the scriptures and rambling for this day, this day we celebrate the birth of Immanuel, Jesus Christ?
- When Jesus was born, and His mother held Him and loved Him, his life from that point was still a mystery and yet to unfold. Gipp reveals the life of Christ, from the manger to the cross, through the story of this rambling. Who do you see in the manger, how would you describe the Christ Child?
- The shepherds were inspired to find Him, as were the wise men; later it would Simeon who would wait for Him, and John His cousin who would reveal Him. His life was for all the world to come Home to Him, to find life more abundantly and rest for our souls. Would you like to draw nearer to Jesus Christ today? How do you feel He is calling you closer to Him this Christmas?

Closing Prayer

Thank You, God, Creator of all, for showing us Your love for the world through the life of Your Son, Jesus Christ. Help us Eternal God, to see one another well through Your eyes of love. Give us your vision for Your goodness in one another; and with what we do not understand, ever more then may we be inclined to lean into the love of Christ. Lord Jesus, as we celebrate Your birth this year, may Your Spirit inspire us seek You, that we may find You, to be with You, and not turn away. Amen.

2025 CHRISTMAS DAY

December 25

Scripture Reading: John 1:1-14

"The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the one and only Son, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth." John 1:14

Gipp's Ramblings, Number 354, 1984

Last night, amidst the revelry of celebration, as people toasted with plastic and liquid spirit, a child was born.

Last night, as the parties in offices, in homes, in Charity's halls, burst into full bloom, the guest of honour without room or bed was refused entrance and was directed to a forlorn, unkept stable in the rear of the house of celebration.

Last night, as children were tucked snugly beneath down quilts with wonderful dreams surrounding their small minds, another child was carefully wrapped in swaddling clothes, then laid gently in a rough of hay from which domesticate beast fed.

Last night, while many of us breathed sighs of relief and began to count unreceived bills in our cluttered minds, a young girl in her teens beheld her firstborn, amidst all the ripe odors of an animal barn, wet hay and the coolness of a winter night.

This morning, as torn and shredded paper of various colors cascaded over furniture and lay crumpled on our living room floors, a foster father looked on in concern as a young child was cradled to his mother's breast and was crooned to with the melodious voice of love.

Today, as we sat down to turkey dinners garnished with dressing, with corn, sweet potatoes, rolls, carrots, peas and minced pies, bread and cheese were shared by a humble couple in humble surroundings and thanks were given for a newborn babe who would shape the destiny of an uncaring world.

He could have been born in a palace, but no palace was made available to Him. He could have been born in the finest of hotels, but there was no room for a family without money. He could have been born in the majestic houses of the rich, but He was not of their station.

He was born in a stable because that was the only place we would give Him. Each year He is born again in the stable of our hearts because that is all we make available.

He is the Christ Child, the reason for our celebration.

2025 CHRISTMAS DAY CONTINUED

December 25

Going Deeper

- Christmas is here. Jesus, the Saviour of the world is born! Immanuel – God is with us – has come; the world will never be the same. What comes to mind for you this day as you think about the birth of Jesus, the Son of God?
- We know of some of the things that come next for Jesus in His Life through the biographical accounts provided by the Gospel writers. Now, what comes next for Him in your life? In what ways do you hope for Him to come alive in you, in the story of your life?
- This day can feel heavier for some of us, and for various reasons. Is there someone you could call or write a note to today, whose life would be lightened in hearing your voice, whose heart could find some consolation knowing that someone is thinking of them and cares? God is Love (1 John 4:7-8).

Closing Prayer

Thank You, Creator-God, for the gift of Your Son, Jesus Christ. Help us to live as He called us to; in love toward You, and love for one another, and love for the lives that You have blessed us with. Every breath is a gift, a miracle from You. Spirit of God lead us as we seek to live out the life of Christ, the love of God in the world, that You would be glorified, and that the world would indeed see, and know, that hope has come, that the Saviour of the world Jesus Christ, the incarnate love of God, is born! Hallelujah, amen.

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Gipp Forster

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Gipp's Family

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The Mustard Seed Street Church

"Called not to preach, but to serve." How this community embraces and cares for all, every day, continues to inspire the imagination of God's love for the world and the hope we have in Christ Jesus.

