

# Newsletter Resources: Seeing your life through the lens of the C

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## SUNDAY, 2 DECEMBER 2018

Luke 21:25-28, 34-36

1. This passage can be taken as a metaphor for personal experiences when it seems that your world is collapsing around you: plans thwarted, deep disappointment, something out of your control altering the course of your life, etc.? When have such experiences been a prelude to something new? Allow the dramatic language of the passage to remind you of this experience, making sure that you recognise the double movement of collapse and liberation.
2. Jesus himself is the model in this gospel story as he taught his disciples the spirituality of 'waiting in joyful hope'. What difference has watchfulness (in the sense of being watchful in prayer) made to you in facing difficult situations?
3. Advent is a time that calls us to be alert to the signs of the hidden presence of God in our world. What reminds you of this presence of God? Have there been occasions when something woke you up in an unexpected way to the presence of God in the world, e.g. through love, beauty, nature, etc.?



## SUNDAY, 9 DECEMBER 2018

Luke 3:1-6

1. The manner in which Luke identifies in detail the time when John the Baptist started his preaching shows that Luke regarded this as a historic moment. Perhaps you can recall in detail the time and the circumstances of particularly significant moments in your life?
2. John called people to give expression to their desire for a change of heart by a symbolic baptism in the Jordan. When have you found it helpful to symbolise your desire to change for the better by some symbolic gesture, e.g., burning a packet of cigarettes, sending a card, making a phone call, etc.
3. Behind the quotation from Isaiah lies the practice of preparing festival routes for religious celebrations. Isaiah visualises such a celebration to celebrate the return of the Israelites to Jerusalem. Can you recall a particularly memorable Advent? What happened? Think of what you can do this Advent.



## SUNDAY, 16 DECEMBER 2018

Luke 3:10-18

1. 'What should we do?' The common thread in John's answers was to encourage his questioners to be other-centred rather than self-centred, each in the context of their own circumstances. In your experience, what difference has it made for you when you changed your attitude in this way?
2. John told the people in a direct and honest way what they should do. Perhaps you have had friends who did not beat about the bush but have told you honestly what they

thought about your behaviour when you asked them? In gratitude, recall such friends.

3. The humility of John comes out in this passage, happy to acknowledge that he only had a minor role to play in relation to the Messiah. At the same time he was enthused by his mission to 'proclaim the good news to the people'. What difference has it made for you when you were able to see the good in yourself, and use your gifts without having to score by portraying yourself as greater than someone else?



## SUNDAY, 23 DECEMBER 2018

Luke 1:39-44

1. The greeting of Elizabeth to Mary, 'Blessed are you among women and blessed is the fruit of your womb,' is a joyful welcome of the child to come. Bringing new life into the world through pregnancy and birth is one of the most awesome human experiences. How have you experienced this for yourself or in someone close to you?
2. The image of the pregnant Mary going a distance to visit her cousin is a symbol of willingness to look beyond one's own needs to the needs of others. When have you witnessed that kind of generosity in others, or have been able to act in this way yourself?
3. Mary is praised for her faith, because she believed the promise made her by the Lord would be fulfilled. In what ways have you experienced blessings from your faith and trust in God's promises?



## SUNDAY, 30 DECEMBER 2018

Luke 2:41-52

1. Luke's skill as a storyteller comes through in the details of the story in a way that many people can identify with: the loss of a child, the frantic search, the seemingly offhand speech of the teenager. Let the drama of the story speak to you. Where do you find good news in it?
2. In Luke's Gospel this story serves to give a glimpse of the future greatness of Jesus, the teacher of his people. Sometimes we can look back over our own life, or the lives of others, and with hindsight can see in childhood or teenage years a glimpse of gifts and talents that were later to blossom. Where have you seen this?
3. 'Did you not know that I must be about my Father's business?' This seemingly insensitive reply by Jesus to Mary serves to highlight that in his life the mission given him by God would take precedence over family ties, painful though this would be. Perhaps you have known situations in your own life where there was pain for family members as you followed your own destiny? Where in the midst of the pain was the good news?



## SUNDAY, 6 JANUARY 2019

### Matthew 2:1-12

1. The magi came from the east, hoping to meet Jesus and guided by a star. On your life's journey what are the hopes that inspire you, and what stars guide your steps? Name them for yourself.
2. The magi travelled together. Who have been your companions on life's journey? What has it been like when you have realized that you had companionship along the road? What made you conscious of that companionship? How was it demonstrated?
3. The magi lost sight of the star for a while. What clouds obscure the star that guides your life? Think of those to whom you have turned to get a renewed sense of direction. Perhaps some, like Herod, gave bad advice, but others were wise guides. Remember with particular gratitude those who warned you about dangers on the road and helped you set off with confidence on the right road again.
4. Eventually the magi had the joy of meeting Jesus. In the Epiphany we celebrate God made visible to all humanity. What encounters have you had in life that left you with the sense that God was in what had happened? How did these meetings help you as you, like the magi, 'returned to your own country'?



## SUNDAY, 13 JANUARY 2019

### Luke 3:15-16, 21-22

1. The people were searching and John pointed them in the direction of Jesus. On your life's journey who have been the John the Baptist people for you, people who have pointed you in the right direction?
2. The Baptism of Jesus was a very special moment for him that affirmed him in his identity as Son of God and in his mission. Recall the experiences that affirmed you – either in your sense of who you are, or in relation to the direction you were taking in life.
3. The Baptism of Jesus marks a transition point in his life, and the start of his public ministry. Recall the transition points in your own life. Where did you see the grace of God at work in those times?
4. This experience of Jesus occurred when he was at prayer. What part has prayer played in opening you to being aware of God in your life? What part has prayer played in helping you through a transition point in your life?



## SUNDAY, 20 JANUARY 2019

### John 2:1-11

1. The story is a story of abundance, the abundance of the blessings God gives us. How have you been aware of the abundance of God's blessings? Let the memories lead you to prayer of thanks and praise for the times in your life when that joy and fulfilment have been very real to you.
2. John uses a number of images (marriage, wine, feast, etc.) to symbolise the abundance of God's love. Do you have a favourite image, or metaphor, that reminds you of the abundance of God's love and blessings?
3. The *hour* of Jesus had not yet come when the glory of God would be fully revealed. Even so, something of the glory of God was revealed in the sign that took place. For us, also, the revelation of the full glory of God lies in the future, but we do get glimpses along the way. Recall some of the *signs* that have revealed to you something of the glory of God, e.g., nature, art, friendship, etc.
4. Mary/Jesus. It is interesting to note that despite the apparent rebuff, Mary is the first person in the narrative to show (at the level of the action of the story) that the correct response to the presence of Jesus is to trust in him. When have you trusted in the word of Jesus like that? What relationships do you have that you can trust like that? Do you recall times when your trust was rewarded even when you had initially been disappointed?



## SUNDAY, 27 JANUARY 2019

### Luke 1:1-4, 4:14-21

1. The scene in the synagogue marks the launch of the public ministry of Jesus in Luke. Read the quotation from Isaiah slowly. Reflect on each line carefully. Which of these images captures something of what Jesus and his message has meant for you?
2. Jesus was filled with the Spirit and sent. He came bursting with a message to communicate. When have you had the experience of being enthused by something in that way? Who have been the people you met who had that kind of enthusiasm?
3. His message was addressed to those who were poor, oppressed, blind, or captives. Who are these today? In what ways have you been, or are you, among these? How has the message of Jesus been good news for you, freed you, given you new sight, or revealed God's favour to you?
4. The message Jesus had was one of liberation and he told his listeners that it was being fulfilled even as they listened. It is being fulfilled even as we hear it *now*. If this does not resonate with you right now, when has the gospel given you an experience of liberation?

