

Daily Treasure  
Journey to Christmas – (Christmas Grief Relief)  
Week 4, 12/4/23  
Monday

You are Mine!  
Sharon W. Betters

Today's Treasure

*Do not be afraid, Abram, I am your shield, your very great reward.  
Genesis 15:1*

*If you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise.  
Galatians 3:29*

What gives us the strength to get through the holidays when our hearts want to give up? I never want to forget the anguish and tears and even days of darkness and despair in those first years without Mark. I did not believe I would – could – live this long without him. Yet, here I am, calling back to those in the deepest sorrows – God is sovereign and you can trust Him. How did this happen? I share most of my story in my books, Treasures of Encouragement and Treasures in Darkness. Readers learn that my theology held me when nothing else could. A key truth was and is the promise of God's presence. Friends, what better time to sink into the precious blanket of God's love than the birth of Immanuel – which means God with us?

This core truth helped equip Mary, the mother of Jesus, for the journey God marked out for her as we see in the declaration of the angel:

*Fear not! For you have found favor with God! And the Lord is with you!  
Luke 1:30*

Friends, Mary was about to embark on the hardest pathway of her life. Yes, she would experience priceless treasures along the way, but she would also live out a parallel life that invited fear and grief. And through this angel, God tells her He is giving her all she needs for the journey – the most precious gift of all – the treasure of His favor and Presence. He gives us the same gift as we travel with sorrow wrapped around our souls. His presence as described in Scripture, becomes the grid through which we can navigate how to walk by faith in the Land of Grief.

God's promise of His presence was not the first time His children heard these profound words. Let's start with a strong theological foundation and eavesdrop on an ancient conversation, a verbal exchange where God gives the mother of all gifts to Abraham and everyone in Abraham's family (which includes you if you are a child of God (Galatians 3:29). To begin to understand the deep emotion of this moment, reach back into your own treasure chest of memories and recollect the delight and joy you experienced when you gave your loved one a priceless gift. That's how we imagine God felt when Abraham began unwrapping this precious gift placed in his hands by the very heart of God. Abraham was not seeking God and we think he was a moon worshipper. In this unique conversation (Genesis 12:1-3) God says (my translation), "Abraham, you're my child now. I chose you. From this moment on, I am binding you to me, I will walk with you. As we walk through life together, I will teach you what it means to be my child. When you are faced with difficult choices and painful circumstances, remember this. I am with you always. I will bless you. You in turn will be a blessing to others. Through you, I am creating a community, a family with more people than you can count. You will be a blessing to others and this covenant community will be a blessing to many because of my Presence."

In Genesis 15:1 God continues this conversation with the words:

*Do not be afraid, Abram, I am your shield, your very great reward.*

In response to Abram's fear, God promises His Presence which is the greatest protection and reward of all. So what does this have to do with my life choices? Or what to do on Christmas Eve and Christmas Day? Or how to reconcile my deep sorrow with trusting God in the dark places? I have often said that when Mark went to heaven, he took my mind with him. I couldn't think straight and to this day admit I have trouble making quick decisions. But God did not leave me or you without a grid through which to push life decisions.

Our decisions start with this truth: I belong to Christ. Those four words reveal I am Abraham's seed which means I am part of the fulfillment of God's promise to build a huge family from the seed of Abraham. Therefore, the same promises He made to Abraham are part of my eternal inheritance, and yours. Every promise God made to Abraham belongs to me and you if you know Jesus as your Savior. God promises me His Presence, He will bless me and I am part of a covenant community (spiritual family). It's in this family I will experience blessings and learn how to be a blessing.

Whether in the mundane moments or in my most broken places, this truth carries me, whether it is in deciding how to spend Christmas the first year after our son's death,

when I struggle with depression or a broken friendship, or even interactions with grandchildren or friends, His word reminds me:

*God Himself has said, 'I will not in any way fail you nor give you up nor leave you without support. I will not, I will not, I will not in any way or degree leave you helpless nor forsake you nor let you down, relax my hold on you. Assuredly not!'*  
*Hebrews 13:5, Amplified*

Friends, Jesus starts His time on earth with the name, Immanuel or God with us. He ends His earthly life with these words to His disciples and to us:

*Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, 20 teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.*  
*Matthew 28:19-20*

Let every Christmas light and candle, every symbol rejoicing His birth, every Christmas carol remind us of the eternal power of His presence and drive us deeper into the light of Jesus:

*The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.*  
*John 1:5*

#### LIFE-GIVING ENCOURAGEMENT

For those who mourn: Give yourself permission to grieve and make decisions that are best for you and your family. I found it helpful to start every day by writing my feelings in my journal, reading scripture (one Psalm, one Proverb) and two devotionals, My Utmost for His Highest and Streams in the Dessert. Some days I began and ended with tears but often the Lord broke the ache in my chest for just a little while through the power of His Word. During December, I focused on the Christmas story and the Lord revealed treasures I had never seen before, each one designed to remind me of His presence, that He is the Lord my God and knows my name.

To help your grieving friend: Give her a journal or a short devotional where she can also record her thoughts. Offer to read through a short devotional together and then meet to talk through what you read or heard, i.e. go for a walk every day or schedule a phone call. We know of women who use Daily Treasure as the foundation of their shared devotional times.

Christmas Grief Relief Resource: Preparing for Christmas in the Darkness of Grief, a conversation with Chuck and Sharon Betters:

<https://markinc.org/help-and-hope/2016/4/30/preparing-for-christmas>

#### PRAYER

Lord, the Christmas story tells us that Your name is Immanuel, "God with us." Remind us that Your Spirit is still with us. We give our hopes and fears to You, through this holiday and every day.