



THURSDAY 12.23.10

II Corinthians 4:16-18

During World War II, Winston Churchill famously said, “He who fails to plan is planning to fail.” Beginning any journey without a firm understanding of your destination is a recipe for disaster. This thought begs the question, “If the Christian life is a journey, what is our intended destination?”

- Stephen Covey, the author of *Seven Practices of Highly Effective People*, writes about “beginning with the end in mind.” Do you feel like your life is heading somewhere? How would you describe your intended destination? In order to reach that goal, are there any course corrections you need to make?
- Paul instructs us to “fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen, since what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal.” What does that mean to you? In what ways might you live out this instruction today?



FRIDAY 12.24.10

II Peter 3:8-9

Like many of the letters of Paul, Peter writes to address specific questions that have arisen in the early church. Many of these first followers of Christ had expected Jesus to return within the span of their own lifetimes. As dearly loved brothers and sisters in Christ began to die before Christ’s return, their anticipation for his return grew, and many began to question leaders like Peter on this issue.

- God not only has a different perspective on our lives, Peter says that God has a different perspective on time. How does Peter describe that? How might Peter’s explanation influence our own expectations regarding God’s work in our lives?
- What does Peter identify as the motivation behind God’s patience in bringing about the return of Christ? Has God been patient with you? Is it possible that God would desire that you be more patient with yourself?



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Series: *The Prince of Peace*
Message: *It's Not Always Going to Be This Way*
Scripture: Isaiah 2:1-5

Things I'd like to remember from today's sermon:

Rev. David Alexander
 Blog: www.davidsbucket.com
[facebook.com/davidsbucket](https://www.facebook.com/davidsbucket)

Twitter: @davidsbucket
 GPS Guide online at: www.growpraystudy.org



Introduction

In our final week of readings for *The Prince of Peace* series, we turn our attention to several of the many sections of scripture which point us towards the future that God is preparing for us. As we anticipate a special and sacred week gathered with family and friends for Christmas, we are reminded that our lives and our world are headed somewhere. God is preparing a future for us, and it is our task to live in expectation of that intended outcome.

The day that we have been waiting for will come this Saturday. For many, it will be a great day of celebration filled with family and friends. For some in our community of faith, it will be a day also touched by sadness because of the loss of loved ones in recent years. As you work through this week's reading, please add these families to your time of prayer. Ask God to bless them in this season and continue the work of healing in their lives.

Holy God, we wait in hopeful expectation for the coming of our King. We hold firmly to the promise you have made to each of us to come and set us free from the chains which bind our hearts and lives. Lord, in this season which is often dominated by the busyness and chaos of our lives, bring us the true and lasting peace that only you can bring. AMEN.



TUESDAY 12.21.10

Psalm 126

A proper understanding of the Christian faith redefines our understanding of suffering. Rather than an experience to be avoided at all costs, Paul writes in Romans 5, ". . . we know that suffering produces perseverance; perseverance, character; and character, hope . . ." Spiritual maturity requires the development of spiritual endurance. Our ability to endure is fueled by our sincere belief that we live in God's world, and God will keep his promises.

- In the first three verses of Psalm 126, where does the Psalmist turn for encouragement? In what ways does looking back help you to move ahead?
- Take a few moments to reflect upon the last time you experienced a time of laughter and joy which was preceded by a prolonged experience of trials and frustration. What did that experience teach you? How might it guide you in your decisions today?



MONDAY 12.20.10

Romans 8:18-25

The creation story recorded in Genesis chapter 1 tells us that during those first six days, God took the time to step back and evaluate his work. When the work of creation is finally completed on the sixth day, the scriptures tell us that "God saw all that he had made and it was very good." Paul's words in Romans are a reminder to us that humanity's sin had created a great wound in the entire creative order that God intended to heal.

- Paul connects our present suffering and our cries for liberation with the groans and pains of giving birth to a child. What does this analogy say to you about the nature of God's work in your life? How might this inspire your hope in the midst of suffering and setbacks?
- In our reading from Micah 5 a few weeks ago, we asked the question, "What is God birthing in your life right now?" Have you answered that question yet?



WEDNESDAY 12.22.10

Haggai 2:6-9

The prophet Haggai preached to the Jews who were living in exile following the destruction of Judah at the hands of the Babylonians. What had been prophesied by Isaiah, Hosea, Micah and others had come to pass. The nation had been destroyed. Israel had hit rock bottom, but now a new voice was calling these Israelites to maintain their hope following such a devastating loss.

- In our reading from Psalm 126 yesterday, the Psalmist encouraged the Israelites to look to their past and to their own experience of how God had delivered them in the past. Where does Haggai encourage the Israelites to turn? Why? When you look to the future, what is it that builds your hope?
- What is the significance of the phrase "the silver is mine and the gold is mine"? How would you describe your faith in God's ability to provide?
