



# REFLECTIONS

Grace OPC

## An Annual Opportunity

By Pastor Brian De Jong

As hard as it is to believe, we are in the month of December and are headed into the holiday season. Despite the ongoing distress over the pandemic, this time of year offers us an annual opportunity that simply should not be missed.

Let me be clear that I am not talking about the many commercial opportunities that come our way – the ability to get that ginormous flat screen TV at rock bottom prices. Nor am I speaking of culinary possibilities – Christmas goodies that are available only in December. I’m not even thinking of the relational options before us – spending time with family and friends, away from the normal pressures of work.

The annual opportunity I have in mind is to think deeply about the Lord Jesus Christ. Now of course, we can and should think about our Savior during every month of the year. There is no reason for not considering the Son of God in May, for instance. But given the still widespread cultural attention given to the birth of Christ, this supplies extra impetus to meditate upon Him. As you hear the Christmas carols being played in the stores, you catch snatches of sound theology that still shine through the glitz and glamor of “the holidays.”

Just think, for instance, of the hymn “Joy to the World.” In the first verse we hear “*The Lord is come: let earth receive her King.*” Jesus Christ came to earth in order to be the king of the whole world. He came proclaiming and kingdom, and He is the King over that kingdom. Its borders stretch to the very ends of the earth – He is the Sovereign Lord of the

whole world!

The second verse reminds us that the Savior reigns, and that men should employ their songs of joy. Meanwhile the whole creation is repeating the sounding joy, and we join our voices with theirs in praise of Him.

I especially love verse 3, which warns “*No more let sins and sorrows grow, nor thorns infest the ground. He comes to make His blessings flow far as the curse is found.*” Jesus’ mission was to roll back the curse laid upon the creation when Adam and Eve fell into sin. His victory guarantees that sins and sorrows will not continue growing,

and that thorns will begin retreating as His kingdom spreads.

The culmination is in v.4 – *He rules the world with truth and grace, and*

*makes the nations prove the glories of His righteousness and wonders of His love.* His worldwide rule will cause all nations to testify to His glory, as every knee bows and every tongue confesses that Jesus is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

So here’s a suggestion for redeeming the season for your spiritual growth: take time this month to consider Jesus. Yes, look at his birth, but also study his life and ministry. Think deeply on his suffering and his cross. See Him laid in the tomb, and watch as He rises victorious from the grave. Marvel as He ascends to heaven, leading captivity captive and giving gifts to the sons of men. Ponder

Volume 15, Issue 12

December 2020

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### Mnemonics...

- 12/6 Soup Supper



*Continued on last page...*





## Chapter 7: On Seizing Opportunities

SOME men are never awake when the train starts, but crawl into the station just in time to see that everybody is off and then sleepily say, "Dear me, is the train gone? My watch must have stopped in the nights. They always come into town a day after the fair and open their wares an hour after the market is over. They make their hay when the sun has left off shining and cut their corn as soon as the fine weather is ended. They cry, "Hold hard!" after the shot has left the gun and lock the stable door when the steed is stolen. They are like a cow's tail, always behind; they take time by the heels and not by the forelock, if indeed they ever take him at all.

They are no more worth than an old almanac; their time has gone for lack of use.

Unfortunately, you cannot throw them away as you would the almanac, for they are like the cross old lady who had an annuity left her and meant to take out the full value of it; they won't die, though they are of no use alive. Take-it-easy and Live-long are first cousins, they say, and the more's the pity. If they are immortal till their work is done, they will not die in a hurry, for

they have not even begun to work yet. Shiftless people generally excuse their laziness by saying, "I am only a little behind"; but a little late is much too late, and a miss is as good as a mile. My neighbor Sykes covered up his well after his child was drowned in it and was very busy down at the Old Farm bringing up buckets of water after every stick of the house had been burnt; one of these days, he'll be making his will when he can't hold a pen, and he'll be trying to repent of his sins when his senses are going.

These slow coaches think that tomorrow is better than today and take for their rule an old proverb turned topsy-turvy—"Never do today what you can put off till tomorrow." They are forever waiting until their ship comes in and always dreaming about things looking up by-and-by, while grass grows in their furrows and the cows get through the gaps in their hedges. If the birds would but wait to have salt put on their tails, what a breakfast they would take home to their families! But while things move as fast they do, the youngsters at home will have to fill their mouths with empty spoons. "Never minds say they, there are better times coming, wait a

little longer." Their birds are all in the bush, and rare fat ones they are, according to their account; and so they had need to be, for they have had none in the hand yet, and wife and children are half-starved. Something will turn up," they say. why don't the idlers go and turn it up themselves? Time and tide wait for no man, and yet these fellows loiter about as if they had a freehold of time, a lease of their lives, and a rabbit hutch full of opportunities. They will find out their mistake when want Suds them out, and that will not be long with some in our village,

for they are already a long way on the road to Needham. They who would not plow must not expect to eat; they who waste the spring will have a lean autumn. They would not strike when the iron was hot, and they will soon find the cold iron very hard.

"He that will not when he may,  
When he will he shall have nay."

Time is not tied to a post like a horse to a manger. It passes like the wind, and he who would grind his corn by it must set the mill-sails. He that gapes till he be fed will gape till he be dead. Nothing is to be got without pains except poverty and dirt. In the old says, they said, "Jack gets on by his stupidity." Jack would find it very different nowadays, I think; but never in old times or any other times, would Jack get on by foolishly letting present chances slip by him, for hares never run into the mouths of sleeping dogs. He that hath time and looks for better time, time comes that he repents himself of time. There's no good in lying down and crying, "God help us!" God helps those who help themselves. When I see a man who declares that the times are bad and that he is always unlucky, I generally say to myself, "That old goose did not sit on the eggs till they were all addled, and now Providence is to be blamed because they won't hatch" I never had any faith in luck at all, except that I believe good luck will carry a man over a ditch if he jumps well and will put a bit of bacon into his pot if he looks after his garden and keeps a pig. Luck generally comes to those who look after it, and my notion is that it taps at least once in a lifetime at everybody's door, but if industry does not open it, away it goes. Those who have lost the last coach and let every opportunity slip by them, turn to abusing Providence for setting everything against them: "If I were a hatter," says one, "men would be born without heads." "If I went to the sea for water," quotes another, "I should find it dried up." Every wind is foul for a crazy ship. Neither the wise nor the wealthy can help him who has long refused to help himself.

John Ploughman, in the most genteel manner, sends his compliments to his friends; and now that harvest is over and the hops all picked, according to promise, he intends giving them a bit of poetry, just to show that he is trying the polishing brushes. John asked the minister to lend him one of the poets, and he gave him the works of George Herbert—very good, no doubt, but rather tangled, like Harkaway Wood. Still, there's a good deal in the queer old verses, and every now and then one comes upon clusters of the sweetest nuts, but some of them are rather hard to crack. The following verse is somewhat near the subject now in hand and is plain enough in reason, though, begging the poet's pardon, John can't see a rhyme in it. However, as it is by the great Herbert, it must be good and will do well enough to ornament John's talk, like a flower stuck in a buttonhole of his Sunday coat.

"Let thy mind still be bent, still plotting where,  
And when, and how thy business may be done.  
Slackness breeds worms; but the sure traveler,  
Though he alight sometimes, still goeth on.  
Acting and stirring spirits live alone:  
Write on the others, Here lies such a one."

### Malawi Ministry Update

A few weeks ago I shared with the congregation the request from Peter Chikaonda for some Westminster shorter catechisms. He had a few that he had given out to new churches. The request was for 250 catechisms, if possible. In response to this request, \$190 was received for the catechisms which covered the cost and some expenses to buy and deliver these catechisms. [Today](#) I sent those funds to Malawi.

Pastor Peter and the church have been praying for Grace Church here. There has not been a lot of covid virus in Malawi but they have heard about the virus in our country and have been praying for us. Please keep the Malawi ministry in your prayers.

Ivan DeMaster

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“If any of you should ask me for an epitome of the Christian religion, I should say it is in that one word—*prayer*. ”

*C.H. Spurgeon*

# December Birthdays

Heidi Mamazza 3rd  
Sue Lorenz 3rd  
Robert Boss 13th  
Conner Froh 14th  
Darryl Harmelink 14th



Grace De Jong 20th  
Marshall Ver Velde 22<sup>nd</sup>  
Dorothy Wingard 27th  
Darlene Cooper 30th

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## *December Anniversaries*

Brian & Dorothy Wingard 11th  
27 Years

Ivan & Carla De Master 28th  
60 Years





*Showing forth the excellencies of Jesus Christ*

# December 2020

Grace OPC



Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
		1	2	3	4	5
6 Soup Supper	7	8	9	10	11	12
13	14	15	16	17	18	19
20	21	22	23	24	25	26
27 Lord's Supper	28	29	30	31		

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# Book Review

From Carla DeMaster

Becoming Elisabeth Elliot  
by Ellen Vaughn

Because of my appreciation for quotes on facebook from Elisabeth Elliot, and her books about her husband, Jim, my daughters gave me this book. When we lived in Illinois, we often got to the Intervarsity missions conferences at the end of December. Elisabeth Elliot spoke her no nonsense, relatable messages at some of these conferences.

Becoming Elisabeth Elliot tells of the things, people, and circumstances in her life that caused her to grow in her faith, relationship to her Lord, and understanding of people. It comes from the detailed journal entries she wrote throughout her life as well as the author's interviews with people who knew her intimately. I was amazed at the frank discussion of negative things that could have caused despair but in committing them to Christ, they matured and strengthened Elisabeth.

Some of the difficulties were Jim's desire to be a single missionary, like Paul. Some were the challenges of an unwritten language, which was Elisabeth's strong ability, having been trained for this. After almost a year of translation work among Colorado Indians in Ecuador, all her pages of work were stolen, destroyed. Living with missionary Rachel Saint and never working well with her or vice versa was another frustration.

Feeling called to work among a people who only wear a string for clothing, Elisabeth had the additional question of what is essential for life. Is American western style, cooking methods, modesty, friendship, the only "Christian" way to live? How does the Bible relate to a totally different culture?

The marriage of Jim and Elisabeth in Quito lasted a few short years before Jim was killed by the Waodani natives, along with four other fellow missionaries. Through Gates of Splendor, and Jim's biography, Shadow of the Almighty tell these stories. The book, The Savage, My Kinsman was difficult for Elisabeth to write. Writer's block and depression overwhelmed her at times. Do people really want to know these things? Sheer discipline, writing one sentence at time, drinking tea, all helped get the book on paper.

One frequent quote from Elisabeth's pages is "Do the next thing." Betty translated an old Saxon poem she loved.:

Do it immediately, do it with prayer,  
do it reliantly, casting all care.  
Do it with reverence, tracing His hand  
who placed it before thee with earnest command.  
Stayed on omnipotence, safe 'neath His wing,  
leave all resultings, do the next thing.

What are you "becoming"? In obedience to Christ in the midst of daily life, what is God making in you? I thank God that His Holy Spirit is working in each believer causing us to become more and more like Jesus.



Showing forth the  
excellencies of Jesus  
Christ

Grace OPC

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Spurgeon

“The Lord might in battle.”

Corner

Psalm 24:8

Well may our God be glorious in the eyes of his people, seeing that he has wrought such wonders for them, in them, and by them. *For them*, the Lord Jesus upon Calvary routed every foe, breaking all the weapons of the enemy in pieces by his finished work of satisfactory obedience; by his

triumphant resurrection and ascension he completely overturned the hopes of hell, leading captivity captive, making a show of our enemies openly, triumphing over them by his cross. Every arrow of guilt which Satan might have shot at us is broken, for who can lay anything to the charge of God’s elect? Vain are the sharp swords of infernal malice, and the perpetual battles of the serpent’s seed, for in the midst of the church the lame take the prey, and the feeblest warriors are crowned.

The saved may well adore their Lord for his conquests *in them*, since the arrows of their natural hatred are snapped, and the weapons of their rebellion broken. What victories has grace won in our evil hearts! How glorious is Jesus when the will is subdued, and sin dethroned! As for our remaining corruptions, they shall sustain an equally sure defeat, and every temptation, and doubt, and fear, shall be utterly destroyed. In the Salem of our peaceful hearts, the name of Jesus is great beyond compare: he has won our love, and he shall wear it. Even thus securely may we look for victories *by us*. We are more than conquerors through him that loved us. We shall cast down the powers of darkness which are in the world, by our faith, and zeal, and holiness; we shall win sinners to Jesus, we shall overturn false systems, we shall convert nations, for God is with us, and none shall stand before us. This evening let the Christian warrior chant the war song, and prepare for to-morrow’s fight. Greater is he that is in us than he that is in the world.

Evening December 3rd, C.H. Spurgeon

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Front Page Concluded...

your great High Priest, who ever lives to make intercession for you. Think of what it will be like, when He comes in glory, with the Father’s holy angels, to judge the living and the dead.

If you take this opportunity, I am certain you will not be disappointed. He will bless you as you draw near to Him in faith and look upon His glorious beauty.