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# DAILY DEVOTIONS

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A thought to comfort and encourage you



Light Lutheran Church  
Pastor Geoff Kuchel

January 2025  
Sunday 18<sup>th</sup> -Saturday 24<sup>th</sup>



**LUTHERAN CHURCH**

OF AUSTRALIA

*where love comes to life*

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THOUGHT TO COMFORT AND ENCOURAGE YOU



## WHAT DO TWENTY20 CRICKET AND ANCIENT ISRAEL HAVE IN COMMON?

by Jane Mueller

But now, this is what the Lord says – he who created you, Jacob, he who formed you, Israel: ‘Do not fear, for I have redeemed you; I have summoned you by name; you are mine’ (Isaiah 43:1).

Read [Isaiah 43:1–7](#)

On this day in 2005, Aussies saw something new at the Western Australian Cricket Association ground in Perth: the very first Australian Twenty20 cricket match.

Traditionalists scoffed. After all, cricket was a gentleman’s game of patience and strategy, not coloured shirts, roaring crowds and fireworks. Yet the game changed. It was fast, bright and captivating. Twenty20 brought new audiences to an old sport. Reinvention breathed fresh life into cricket.

God’s words through Isaiah also speak of reinvention. Israel had been battered by exile. Its identity was fractured. But God declared, ‘Do not fear, for I have redeemed you; I have summoned you by name; you are mine.’ God wasn’t abandoning the covenant – Israel’s story wasn’t over. The God who never lets go was renewing the covenant and reshaping Israel’s story.

We live in a world that thrives on reinvention, but often leaves us exhausted as we constantly update, rebrand and hustle for relevance. The reinvention God offers is different. He doesn’t demand that we remake ourselves to earn his love. Instead, he renames us, claims us and redeems us. Our identity is secure. ‘You are mine.’

Let that sink in.

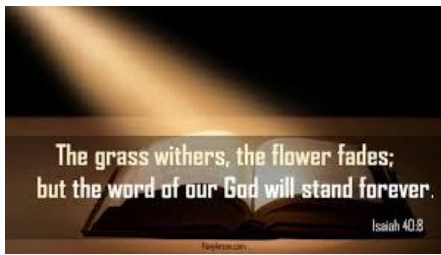
You are his.

Just as Twenty20 reshaped cricket without erasing its heart, God reshapes our lives without discarding who we are. He takes what is weary, fractured or stuck, and breathes new Spirit-filled energy into it. We are called by name into a story of belonging and purpose.

When fear rises – fear of change, of failure, of the unknown – remember that God has already called you by name. You belong. Your life is not defined by exile or loss, but by the redeeming love of the one who says, ‘You are mine’.

***Redeeming God, thank you for calling me by name. When fear rises in me today – whether small or large – guide me to pause and whisper aloud, ‘I am yours. I belong to you.’ Let this confession quiet my fear and steady my steps. Amen***

## A THOUGHT TO COMFORT AND ENCOURAGE YOU



### ASHES DON'T GET THE LAST WORD

by Jane Mueller

A new heart I will give you, and a new spirit I will put within you, and I will remove from your body the heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh (Ezekiel 36:26).

Read [Ezekiel 36:24–28](#)

Australia knows bushfires. Black Friday in 1939 scorched Victoria, darkening the skies with smoke and killing 71 people. Ash Wednesday in 1983 claimed 75 lives across Victoria and South Australia, levelling whole communities. Black Summer in 2019–20 brought devastation on a scale almost beyond comprehension – millions of hectares burned, and thousands of homes destroyed. Thirty-three people lost their lives to the flames, and hundreds more deaths were later counted among the toll from smoke exposure. Every summer, the memory of bushfire lingers like a scar on our land and our hearts.

Ezekiel also knew devastation. He wrote to exiles who had seen their land razed, their temple destroyed, and their hope reduced to ash. Into that bleakness, God spoke, 'I will sprinkle clean water upon you, and you shall be clean ... I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit in you.' God promised that destruction would not be the final word. Renewal was coming.

Have you walked in a bushfire-blackened landscape? It looks hopeless. Yet after rain, green shoots push through the ash. Nature holds the secret of resurrection. Likewise, God takes our scorched places – the losses, the grief, the failures – and brings new life. His Spirit writes resilience on our hearts. He plants hope where there was only ruin. Scars remain, but scars can testify. Just as the landscape bears the memory of fire even as it regenerates, we bear witness to God's Spirit who brings life from death. Out of ashes comes beauty. Out of devastation comes a new heart.

*God of hope, I remember those who grieve losses caused by bushfires – past and present. Bring comfort to the broken-hearted and strength to rebuild. As I go about my day today, show me signs of new growth – a plant sprouting, a flower opening or even weeds pushing through cracks. Let these signs remind me that you bring life where I least expect it. Amen.*

A THOUGHT TO COMFORT AND ENCOURAGE YOU



## THE DAY THE SPIRIT HIT 'GO'

By Jane Mueller

Peter said to them, 'Repent and be baptised every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ so that your sins may be forgiven, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit' (Acts 2:38).

Read [Acts 2:36–42](#)

Pentecost is when the Holy Spirit turned a local message into a global one. Different people, different accents, different dialects, one message: Jesus is alive. The Holy Spirit disassembled arguably the biggest obstacle to global mission – the language barrier – by translating the gospel into the mother tongue of people from every nation under heaven. Pentecost shows that God doesn't wait for us to work our way toward him; he meets us where we are. He meets us in our own language, our own culture and our own generation.

And, for that reason, maybe the Pentecost account needs a 'remix' to remind us that when God speaks fluent 'human', he speaks to all generations.

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### The Pentecost remix: Generation Alpha dialect

Fast-forward 50 days from Passover. Jerusalem's stacked with pilgrims and passports from every corner – accents everywhere. Then boom: the disciples start spitting truth in every language. Not subtitles – *Spirit-titles*.

Crowds freeze mid-conversation like, 'Hold up – how are these Galileans speaking my hometown lingo?' Peter rolls up and goes, 'Chill, this isn't energy-drink mania – the Spirit pressed "go", that's all.' Then he drops the gospel bomb: Jesus is alive. (Peter's talking about the J-Man – the GOATed teacher who dropped parables like mixtapes, fed 5,000 with leftovers, and told sickness to sit down.) Peter drops the sequel: the main character's alive, the Holy One's still running the show. Death got debugged. Forgiveness is legit, and the Spirit's for the global group chat.

The crowd is in meltdown, like, 'Bruh, what even is step two? Do we just download forgiveness?'

Peter hits them with the classic mic drop: 'Μετανοήσατε, καὶ βαπτισθήτω.'

Luther remixed it for his gen: 'Tut Buße und lasst euch taufen.'

Vintage translators nerfed it to: 'Repent and be baptised.'

Gen Alpha translation: 'Change lanes, turn around, get grounded and glowed up.'

The Spirit goes full send – holy fire, zero chill. Heaven's update drops, tongues are trending, and hope is on repeat. It's a full-on gracequake – fear collapses, hearts reboot, and mercy shakes the system. Ordinary people walk like miracles because heaven's already gone live.

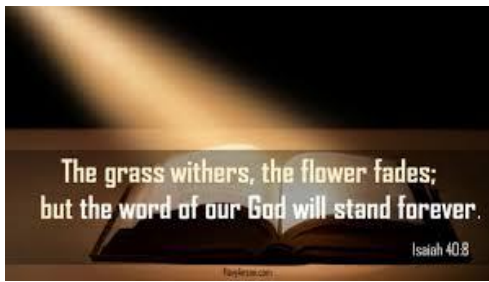
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That's Pentecost: God turning human confusion into connection, and chaos into community.

The Spirit speaks our language today – through culture, creativity and even our clumsy words. We don't need a polished speech or perfect prayers because God works through our real talk, our half-formed thoughts, our casual slang and our misunderstood jargon. He takes our normal, everyday voice – regardless of our generational dialect – and translates our words into living hope.

*Holy Spirit, translate my hesitation into faith, my distraction into focus and my words into worship. Let your fire burn bright – in me, in your church and in the world. Amen*

A THOUGHT TO COMFORT AND ENCOURAGE YOU



## ARE YOU TRYING TO REVIVE WHAT GOD HAS RELEASED?

by Jane Mueller

Therefore we were buried with him by baptism into death, so that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, so we also might walk in newness of life (Romans 6:4).

Read [Romans 6:3–11](#)

Some of us are lugging around stories we were never meant to keep alive.

Old habits, old fears, old versions of ourselves – things God has released in Christ. We polish them, defend them, justify them and even call them ‘just how I am’. But resurrection life doesn’t come by dragging the past into the present. It comes by letting the past stay finished.

Paul doesn’t mince words in today’s reading. Baptism is hardly a sentimental symbol. It shows us what God is like – decisive, cleansing and lifegiving. When water is poured over us, it declares that the old ways of living no longer have control. The same God who meets us in that water continues meeting us every day, calling us out of old patterns and into new life.

So why do we keep trying to revive what God has released? Why do we rehearse the same resentments, recycle the same narratives and keep identifying with the same wounds? The perfectionist who can’t stop striving, the leader who keeps replaying old failures, the friend who keeps apologising for taking up space, the parent who still believes they’re not enough? Maybe it’s because the old life is familiar. And sometimes, ‘familiar’ feels safer than ‘free’.

But resurrection doesn’t happen in comfort zones. You can’t keep one foot in the past and one in grace. Paul says, ‘Consider yourselves dead to sin and alive to God.’ That’s an active choice – daily, sometimes hourly.

So maybe it’s time to ask: What’s still taking up oxygen in my soul that should’ve been surrendered by now? What part of me keeps trying to reclaim a life that’s already been transformed?

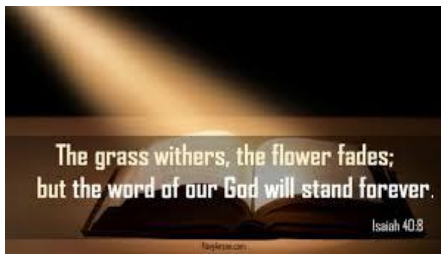
Stop propping up the old storyline. Step fully into the new one.

Stop trying to become someone new. Start living like the new creation you already are. And if no-one’s ever spoken this over you, let it land now: the old you is finished. The new you is alive. Walk in it, breathe from it, own it, live it, shine through it.

*God of resurrection, expose parts of me still clinging to what you’ve released. Give me the courage to stop rehearsing the things you’ve already finished, and to rise – fully and freely – into the life you’ve given me. Amen.*



## A THOUGHT TO COMFORT AND ENCOURAGE YOU



### WATER + BLOOD + SPIRIT = REAL FAITH + REAL LIFE

By Jane Mueller

Whoever has the Son has life; whoever does not have the Son of God does not have life (1 John 5:12).

Read [1 John 5:6–12](#)

We live in a world that trusts what it can see. If it can't be proven, posted or peer-reviewed, it's treated as suspect. But John cuts through the noise: the truest things aren't always the loudest. God's truth doesn't shout through headlines; it quietly moves through the water, the blood and the Spirit.

The water points to Jesus' baptism – God's declaration that Christ is his Son.

The blood takes us to the cross – love proven, not promised.

And the Spirit keeps that same love alive – the ongoing proof that what Jesus started hasn't finished.

These three tell one story: God is alive, real and right here.

It's easy to let faith become a concept to manage rather than a life to live. We quote it, discuss it, explain it and organise it. But John doesn't write about faith in a theoretical sense. He brings us back to the pulse of it: whoever has the Son has life. Not doctrine. Not theory. Not a rulebook. Not duty. *Life*. The kind that breathes, moves and changes things.

So, what does this look like for me on a Friday morning in 2026? It's courage when fear shouts louder. It's forgiveness when I'd rather prove my point. It's integrity when convenience would be easier. It's the quiet defiance of believing Jesus isn't just the topic of my prayers, but the oxygen in my lungs.

This passage doesn't ask us to add more religion to our week or to get busier for God. It asks if Christ's life is pulsing through ours, shaping how we think, how we love and how we show up. Today's passage calls us – you and me – to be alive in Christ.

***Jesus, you are life itself. Wake me from autopilot. Pull my faith out of theory and into motion. Amen.***

## A THOUGHT TO COMFORT AND ENCOURAGE YOU



### THE WAITING

By Jane Mueller

I waited patiently for the Lord; he inclined to me and heard my cry. He drew me up from the desolate pit, out of the miry bog, and set my feet upon a rock, making my steps secure (Psalm 40:1,2).

Read [Psalm 40:1–11](#)

There's a kind of waiting that grinds. The kind where you've done everything right – prayed, served, persevered – and nothing shifts. Where your faith feels static, and your prayers seem unheard. David knew this waiting. He didn't downplay it or romanticise it: 'I waited patiently for the Lord.' The original Hebrew text can be interpreted as, 'I waited and waited.' It's not serene; it's survival.

David called his place of despair 'the desolate pit'. Sometimes, the pit is burnout. Sometimes, it's depression. Sometimes, it's the slow suffocation of carrying other people's expectations while pretending you're fine. The miry bog clings – fear of failure, resentment that you can't say aloud, the quiet cynicism that creeps in when God feels absent.

And yet, David doesn't stay in the mud. He's pulled out, not because he climbed harder, but because God reached lower. 'He drew me up ... set my feet upon a rock.' Grace does what striving never could.

Notice that the rescue doesn't erase the scars. David still remembers the pit. He still names the waiting. Faith doesn't mean pretending it never happened; it means standing steady while you still smell like the mud you came from.

Here we are in 2026. It's still early in the year – the time we're meant to feel renewed, focused and ready. But maybe you already feel spent. Perhaps you've hit February-level fatigue in January. If so, you're right where grace works.

Maybe 'waiting and waiting' is your first act of faith this year. Not hustling, not forcing; just holding your ground while God does what only he can – because he still pulls people out of pits, even when the calendar's shiny and your soul isn't.

So, if you're in the thick of it, stop polishing the mud or trying to climb your own way out of the pit. Wait ... not because you've given up, but because you've handed it over.

Trust that the waiting isn't wasted. Give God the truth of it and let him meet you there.

Let him lift you again. Let him restore you to solid and steady ground.

In her book, *When the Heart Waits*, Sue Monk Kidd writes, 'When you're waiting, you're not doing nothing. You're doing the most important something there is. You're allowing your soul to grow up. If you can't be still and wait, you can't become what God created you to be.'

The pit isn't the end of the story. It's where grace starts to write a new one.

***God, I'm tired of pretending the pit doesn't exist. You see the exhaustion, the fear and the ache I've stopped naming. Meet me there. Pull me up again. Amen.***





A THOUGHT TO COMFORT AND ENCOURAGE YOU



## THAT NOBODY IS SOMEBODY

by Reid Matthias

The first thing Andrew did was to find his brother Simon and tell him, 'We have found the Messiah!' (that is, the Christ). And

Andrew brought his brother to Jesus (John 1:41,42a).

Read [John 1:29-42](#)

At first, Jesus wasn't famous. Not like who the internet tells me are the five most famous people in the world: Cristiano Ronaldo and Lionel Messi (soccer players), followed by Kylie Jenner, Kim Kardashian and Taylor Swift.

No, Jesus was not a 'nepo baby' (someone made famous by their parents). His parents were not famous (not at that point, anyway), and he didn't receive any extra assistance upon growing up, save some frankincense, myrrh and gold. And Jesus wouldn't have been identified by anyone in Galilee. Except on those two days when Jesus walked by his cousin, John, who yelled out, 'Look, the Lamb of God!'

Strange, isn't it? Of all the things John could have said as he pointed. You know – 'Hey, everybody, that's the Son of God right there!' or 'Everybody drop what you're doing. That man is going to save the entirety of human existence from their sins!' And instead, he chose, 'the Lamb of God!'

Maybe that was part of the intrigue for Andrew, one of John's disciples. After John had been questioned about his own Messiah-ness, he pointed out his cousin, Jesus, as the one who was and is to come.

But he wasn't famous.

Yet after one afternoon, Andrew saw enough in Jesus to run to the most important person in his life, his brother Peter (Simon). He told him that this no-name, nobody, wandering, totally unexpected rabbi was the Messiah. The one they'd been waiting for. What would you do if Jesus showed up at your local grocery store? How would you react? If his identity was verified, who would you tell first, and how would you tell the story?

***Lamb of God, Jesus Christ, come into my life today. Be with me where I'm staying. Be with me where I'm going. Be with me every second of my life. Amen.***

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Reid Matthias is the school pastor at St Andrews Lutheran College in Tallebudgera, Queensland. Reid is married to Christine, and together with their three incredible daughters, Elsa, Josephine and Greta, they have created a Spotify channel (A 13) where they have recorded music. Reid has recently published his seventh novel, A Miserable Antagonist. You can find all of his novels and music links at [www.reidmatthias.com](http://www.reidmatthias.com)

## **SERMON- EPIPHANY 2**

### **A WORD FROM THE WORD**

**The following day John was again standing with two of his disciples. As Jesus walked by, John looked at him and declared, "Look! There is the Lamb of God!" When John's two disciples heard this, they followed Jesus.**

**Andrew, Simon Peter's brother, was one of these men who heard what John said and then followed Jesus. Andrew went to find his brother, Simon, and told him, "We have found the Messiah" (which means "Christ").**

#### **Billy Graham Crusade**

In 1947 Billy Graham began an evangelism crusade at Maddison Square Gardens in New York. It lasted for 12 weeks. A significant aspect of that crusade was an altar call, accompanied by the singing of **Just as I am**.

It was the first of over four hundred Billy Graham crusades, held in most countries in the world. Billy Graham crusaded for over 58 years. In 1984, 1.1 million people attended the crusade in Seoul. That was the biggest. There was even a Billy Graham Crusade in Beijing in 1988. He crusaded in Australia four times, 1959, 1968, 1969 and 1979.

In 1968, Billy Graham held crusades in Brisbane and Sydney. With great anticipation, my father took me to the Brisbane Exhibition Ground where there were probably about 20,000 people. I can't remember much, except that there were a lot of people, and the stage was too far away to see what was going on.

In 2019, while I was in Darwin, I joined a team of Christian leaders who provided prayer and counselling support for his son, Franklin Graham. There were a number of training sessions and we waited in great anticipation. It was a fascinating experience, even if Franklin didn't seem to be half the preacher that his father was.

When it was all over, I remember reflecting on this event. What were we looking for? What did we go out to see? What did we find? Did people come simply because Franklin was Billy Graham's son?

They are exactly the same questions that Jesus asked of those who travelled to Bethany, across the Jordan, to listen to the renowned preacher called John the Baptist. John came from a family of priests and lived a very disciplined spiritual life in a religious community just north of the Dead Sea.

Later, Jesus asked these questions: **"Who is this man in the wilderness that you went out to see? Did you find him weak as a reed, moved by every breath of wind? Or were you expecting to see a man dressed in expensive clothes? Those who dress like that live in palaces, not out in the wilderness. Were you looking for a prophet? Yes, and he is more than a prophet."**

### **John the Baptist Crusade**

I want you to take a journey with some of those who travelled to Bethany across the Jordan. Among them were a few men who had travelled from Galilee in the north, a couple of fishermen Simon and Andrew, and their friends, Philip and Nathanael. It sounds like they were already deeply committed followers of John. John's sole purpose was to prepare for the Messiah. His message involved an altar call. "Repent and be baptised." And he instructed people on God's righteousness. "Don't abuse your authority and be satisfied with what God has given you."

What were the crowds of people looking for? We know that some were simply onlookers and others were doing intelligence research. Why did people travel from Jerusalem to the small religious community living on the edge of the wilderness? What attracted them?

Was it how John dressed? (Camel's Hair was seen as a sign of his austerity. It was considered proof of his radical and extreme personality.) Was it his Fire and Brimstone preaching style? (His passion hinted at evidence of madness, according to his critics.) Was it his integrity? (Herod Antipas was irritated by John's criticisms of his immoral life)

John the Baptist led a community committed to his preaching and life. It is possible that he had already been a part of their community and rose from among them. But as attractive as John the Baptist had become to the people of Jerusalem who travelled out to his revival crusades, John made it clear, right from the very beginning, that he was not the main event.

**Are you the Messiah? NO! Are you Elijah? NO! Then, are you a prophet? NO! Who are you? "I am a voice shouting in the wilderness."**

### **Pointing to Jesus: The Lamb of God**

To his own community John gave a bold directive: Look! There he is, The Lamb of God! But not all of his community changed their commitment from John to Jesus. The community of John remained intact for many years, even after John was imprisoned for his bold preaching. Nevertheless, the connections between Jesus and John remained strong, very strong.

At that time some disciples of John came to question Jesus, and after a discussion about the validity of Jesus' work as the Messiah, Jesus emphasized the significance of John as a Prophet, as The Voice in the Wilderness, and as a spiritual leader.



**"I assure you, of all who have ever lived, none is greater than John the Baptist. Yet even the most insignificant person in the Kingdom of Heaven is greater than he is!**

After those words, Jesus went on to draw a line, a clear line between John's connection to the Old Covenant and its emphasis on a commitment to the Law, and Jesus' overflowing grace.

In spite of that separation, between the Law and Grace, John's influence as a preacher and spiritual leader was so significant that years later his followers were found in Corinth and Ephesus. So what had those men been searching for? What did they see in John the Baptist? Eventually, the Holy Spirit turned them to Jesus Christ, the promised Messiah.

Far more importantly for us is that we direct our questions to the enthusiastic comments of Andrew to his older brother Simon:

**Andrew went to find his brother, Simon, and told him, "We have found the Messiah".**

**The Lamb of God! The Messiah!** These are words that the people of Jerusalem, the people of Israel, understood clearly. They pointed to the hope that those people had for the sovereign power of Yahweh over their lives.

What are **we** looking for in Jesus? How do we direct others to Jesus? Before we can begin to point to Jesus we need to know what Jesus means for us. How would you describe Jesus? How does Jesus meet your deepest needs? Would you point to Jesus as the Messiah, the Christ, as God's Passover Lamb? What words would you use to describe how Jesus brings life into your life.

**In him we find grace and forgiveness!**

**So the Word became human and lived here on earth among us. He was full of grace and truth, unfailing love and faithfulness.**

## A LETTER FROM THE PASTOR

### THE LAMB OF GOD

JOHN 1:29-34

*The next day John saw Jesus coming toward him and said, "Look! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world! He is the one I was talking about when I said, 'A man is coming after me who is far greater than I am, for he existed long before me.' I did not recognize him as the Messiah, but I have been baptizing with water so that he might be revealed to Israel."*

*I have always been fascinated by the unstated undertones of the stories about Jesus, the things that are left unsaid, yet may be implied.*

*One of those undertones is the relationship between John the Baptist and Jesus. They are 3<sup>rd</sup> cousins, by our definition of blood separation. Their mothers are cousins. But we know nothing of their ongoing connections, other than that the two mothers shared a time together, before the birth of their sons.*

*Simon and Andrew were fishermen from Bethsaida on the northern-western shore of the Sea of Galilee and Jesus, lived in Nazareth, which is on the south-western side of the Sea of Galilee. What is left unsaid is the knowledge that the fishermen had of Jesus, prior to his baptism by John the Baptist.*

*In the first instance, John stated that he didn't know that Jesus was the Messiah, until this was revealed at the time of Jesus' baptism. The implication we have often worked with is that Jesus and John didn't know each other. Yet, when you read the Gospel of John, it is hard to ignore the possibility that John knew Jesus well; he just didn't know that he was the Messiah, until his baptism.*

*Likewise, it is incredible that there is a small group of men who travelled to Bethany and already seemed to be disciples of John, part of his community. The timing in John's Gospel suggests that after Jesus had called Andrew, and then Simon, whom he renamed Peter, to follow him, they immediately returned to Galilee for a wedding feast. The disciples were included in the invitation. Does that include all of his disciples, or just the four (don't forget Philip and Nathanael) who were with Jesus at Bethany (across the Jordan)? They all certainly seemed to be with him when he traveled to Jerusalem, not long after.*



*In the other Gospels, the public ministry of Jesus began with the calling of the twelve, from among a large number of followers. And the numbers seemed to have been flexible, with other commitments affecting how often they might have followed Jesus on his work, or on his journeys to the festivals in Jerusalem.*

*It is quite possible that Jesus knew many, or at least some, of his apostles long before he began his public ministry. But it was his call to them, to follow, which had the most impact on their lives. He chose! He called! And they followed Jesus, into a life of caring, preaching and often martyrdom. But their lives were blessed by the grace of Christ.*

*Your shepherd-servant and brother in Christ.*

**Pastor Geoff**