

not always going well! The good times may be the times when we find it easier to see the Lord with us but He is ever present ~ it is us that block Him ~ He waits for us to remove the blockage ~ whatever it is, with or without the assistance of His Spirit.

The third element is one of reassurance, we should never feel fear about God being with us and it is safe to let the Lord's face turn towards us. Remember, the Old teaching was that if you dared look at God or caught a glimpse of Him you would be struck dead! Not a good incentive to get to know God ~ rather the opposite ~ a real deterrent encouraging you and I to keep our distance and certainly not come to call Him by the familiar ~ Abba!

And the outcome the recipient will know peace.

All over the Christmas period the musings have simply been a picture of the 12 days of Christmas and an explanation of the meanings of the elements. Maybe you could use it to get to know more about some of the basic teaching and doctrine of the church ~ that should help you to understand more about what scripture teaches of God and our Lord and how to live by it.

Forget New years resolutions ~ they are a recipe for failure ~ and if we are honest we don't need any help to fail or feel that we have failed! Instead learn the blessing and pray it naming before the Lord those to receive it and put your trust in the Spirit to ensure that they be aware of God in their lives.

Don't dictate how or ask for confirmation that the blessing has been received ~ the Lord knows what you and I need and we will be shown whatever is helpful to our own maturing in the faith we are sharing.

May you know God's Blessing throughout 2017 and learn to recognise that blessing in your life.

“The Lord bless you  
and keep you;  
the Lord make his face shine on you  
and be gracious to you;  
the Lord turn his face toward you  
and give you peace.”  
Amen,

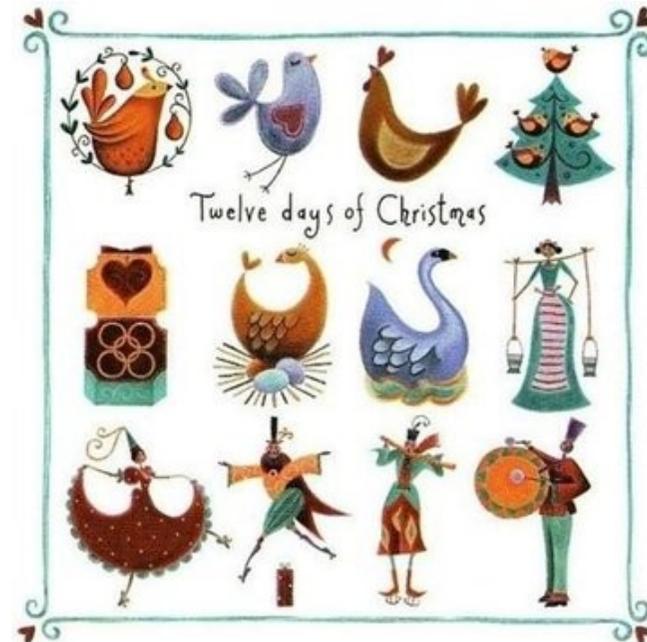
## Ministry Musings

~ Babe in a manger ~

~ bird in a tree ~

~ celebrate Christmas but what do you see? ~

~ Knowing Jesus, Making Him Known ~



- 2 Turtle Doves = The Old and New Testaments;
- 3 French Hens = Faith, Hope and Charity, the Theological Virtues;
- 4 Calling Birds = the Four Gospels and/or the Four Evangelists;
- 5 Golden Rings = The first Five Books of the Old Testament, the "Pentateuch", which gives the history of man's fall from grace;
- 6 Geese A-laying = the six days of creation;
- 7 Swans A-swimming = the seven gifts of the Holy Spirit, the seven sacraments;
- 8 Maids A-milking = the eight beatitudes;
- 9 Ladies Dancing = the nine Fruits of the Holy Spirit;
- 10 Lords A-leaping = the ten commandments;
- 11 Pipers Piping = the eleven faithful apostles;
- 12 Drummers Drumming = the twelve points of doctrine in the Apostle's Creed.

## New years Day 2017

Numbers 6: 22-end            OT page 129  
Galatians 4: 4-7            NT page 186  
Luke 2:15-21                NT page 56

“The Lord bless you  
and keep you;  
the Lord make his face shine on you  
and be gracious to you;  
the Lord turn his face toward you  
and give you peace.”

Numbers 6: 24-26

What a fabulous blessing to offer your family friends and neighbours this New Years Morning! But wait a minute ~ if God's love is available to all who receive it then this blessing is for all people and that includes those you do not like, do not understand and those who disregard and disrespect humankind and God's creation generally until they feel His love and respond. Note too that you offer the blessing but it is given or activated by God once you have bestowed it !

So what then is that greatest of blessings that God alone activates ~ or rather has activated for all time? It is of course the giving of His Son, Jesus Christ, in incarnate form so that you and I have a guidance to follow.

The letter to the Galatians tells us of that time ~ when God had prepared His creation as thoroughly as possible and felt the time was right ~ *“the now or never moment”* ~ He sent his Son, born of woman and under the law to redeem those under the law so that each of us might receive sonship.

Now we need to remember what is being said is so that the hearers of the time can understand it and not get hung up on today's feminism and pc attitudes and prejudices ~ the word that is used in this text for adoption to sonship is a legal term referring to the full legal standing of an adopted male heir in Roman culture. Remember too that females, adopted or not could not inherit! But now realise that nowhere in the text does it say that women are excluded and if we accept the text in terms of the rest of Jesus teaching then we accept that each of us, regardless of gender, are invited to call God the Father Abba ~ NOW hear the rest of the text again ~

“God sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, the Spirit who calls out,

“Abba, Father.” So you are no longer a slave, but God's child; and since you are his child, God has made you also an heir.” Galatians 4: 6b,7  
There is no segregation, no distinction all are God's children, therefore all are heirs!

Luke reminds us of the continuing experiences of Mary and Joseph prior to our Lord's birth. The shepherds had returned to the hillsides and their sheep but also we are told that they spread the word about all they had seen and been told about this child and all who heard were amazed!

Mary treasured up all these things; she would have known that word was spreading about this unacceptable and ostracised little family, her family, and the folk would have been struggling with the reality that what was happening was hinged to prophecies in their Scripture ~ and that Mary and Joseph were also following the law they knew in the way they were bringing up the infant.

It is no mistake that Luke records for us that on the 8th day, the time to circumcise a new-born first male, he was presented for this ritual and given the name Jesus ~ which was the name that the angel had declared was to be His before He was conceived.

As the Christian church developed the need for circumcision was dropped. It was a Jewish law and requirement within their tradition and no other (though it is sometimes a medical requirement) and as the faith was open to Jew and non Jew alike and they were all to be considered equal it became absurd to expect the ritual of one group of believers and not another ~ and importantly the New Covenant does not ask it of those in covenant.

So what of all that today and especially on this New Years' Day?

Let's return to the blessing in the Book of Numbers.

To offer such a blessing you and I need to know our Lord and what we are bestowing on the recipients of these words.

The first statement is fairly straightforward ~ you and I can trust our Lord to bless and keep ~ after all He says He will!

The second ~ we are asking that the Lord's face will shine upon the recipient and that He will be gracious towards them ~ what do we mean by that? God's gracious love is ever forgiving to those who repent so that is up to Him ~ but what do we expect that the recipient will experience by the Lord's face shining on them? To understand that part of the blessing we need to have experienced the Lord's face shining on us! We will know that when we know the Lord is close to us ~ things are