

# Light On Our Path



*Messages by Pastor Paul Aasman  
at the Streetlight Mission Church  
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## Table of Contents

Text	Title	Author	Page #
Mark 14:24	<b><i>Christ's Blood of the Covenant</i></b>	P. Aasman	3
Luke 1:76-77	<b><i>Are you Ready for Christmas?</i></b>	P. Aasman	6
Luke 2:19	<b><i>Mary Ponders</i></b>	P. Aasman	10
Genesis 32:26b	<b><i>Jacob Returns to Canaan</i></b>	P. Aasman	13

December 2, 2007  
Pastor Paul Aasman

**Mark 14:24** “‘This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many,’ he said to them.”

### *Christ’s Blood of the Covenant*

Reading: Mark 14:12-26  
Text: Mark 14:24

It was an awesome moment for the disciples. They had come to Jerusalem with Jesus, hoping to celebrate the Passover there. You remember what the Passover is? It was a celebration of how God had sent the angel of death to Egypt to bring death into every family. Only those families were spared who put their faith in God by painting the blood of the Passover lamb upon the doorpost of their home.

So here they were in Jerusalem - the disciples had prepared everything and Jesus was leading the celebration of the Passover. At one point, he took a loaf of bread, held it out to them saying, “*Take it; this is my body.*” Then he took a cup of wine, gave thanks, and then held it out to them saying, “*This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many.*”

When the disciples heard that expression ‘blood of the covenant,’ they immediately would have recognized what that meant. In the Old Testament, we read once about ‘the blood of the covenant.’ It was at Mount Sinai. When Israel came out of Egypt,

on the way to the promised land, they first came to Mount Sinai. They stayed there for a whole year because God entered into a new covenant with his people there, and many ceremonies were needed for that.

After God had given to them the 10 commandments, then we read about a very important ceremony. All the people, or at least their elders and other leaders, gathered in a great assembly. Moses read the law, or ‘the book of the covenant’ and the people replied, “We will do everything the Lord has said; we will obey.”

That was good. Then we read Exodus 24:8 – “*Moses then took the blood, sprinkled it on the people and said, ‘This is the blood of the covenant that the LORD has made with you in accordance with all these words.’*”

Now, what do you think that meant, when Moses sprinkled blood on the people? It meant that their sins were taken away. God no longer thought of them as guilty of sin because of the blood of the covenant. That way, God and his people might live together.

Now, who do you think needed this ceremony more: God or the people? It was for the people, of course. God did not really need the blood of animals. He could forgive the people simply because they believed in him. But the people needed to be comfortable in their relationship with God. They needed to be able to say, “Yes, this is our God. We can count on him to help us

because he loves us. He has forgiven us completely for our sins.” Especially the blood of the covenant would have comforted them.

Now the expression “blood of the covenant” has become much richer. That blood is no longer animal blood, but the blood of Jesus Christ. It is “*my* blood of the covenant.” And this blood is not sprinkled over us, but given to us, in the symbol of grape juice, to drink. We are thus not just sprinkled with the blood of the covenant, but nourished and fed by it so that we might live. It gives us life. Jesus Christ is our spiritual food and drink. We live because of him.

He suffered on the cross. His blood was poured out in the horrible death on the cross. There he suffered the punishment for our sins, and he died. Because of that, our sins are taken away, ‘nailed to the cross.’ Sin cannot separate you from God any more.

Do you think God loves Jesus? Of course. If you receive Jesus, then God loves you just as much. Jesus holds out to you what he calls ‘my blood of the covenant’ so that you might be sure that you belong to God. All your sins are completely forgiven. God accepts you, loves you, will always help you, will do anything for you.

So receive the blood of the covenant: the body and blood of Jesus Christ in the symbols of bread and wine in the Lord’s Supper.

December 23, 2007  
*Pastor Paul Aasman*

**Luke 1:76-77** “And you, my child, will be called a prophet of the Most High; for you will go on before the Lord to prepare the way for him, to give his people the knowledge of salvation through the forgiveness of their sins...”

### ***Are you Ready for Christmas?***

Reading: Luke 1:57-80  
Text: Luke 1:76-77

Are you ready for Christmas? Lots of people have asked me that question over the past two weeks. Are you ready for Christmas? Well, that set me to thinking. I wasn’t quite sure how to answer that. Am I ready? Are you ready?

It would seem that some people are ready, and others are not. Who are the ready ones? Well, it depends: How do you get ready? And what do you need to be ready for? I think the question usually means: Have you bought enough presents, that is, one for every person on your list. And have you bought just the right one. It’s a stressful business, and lots of people are bent out of shape over this for months.

But for a Christian, is that right? I think that our text puts before us quite a different idea. Let’s listen to Zechariah’s song, because the question, “Are you ready for Christmas,” is a very old one. It was first asked 2000 years ago. In his own way, Zechariah is asking exactly that.

Zechariah is holding his newborn son, and is very excited. First, he praises God for remembering his people and sending salvation to them. And then he turns to his son and he talks about the important things John will do for God's people. He says, "you will go on before the Lord to prepare the way for him."

There you have the word "prepare." You see, the people were not yet ready for Christmas, and John would prepare the people. God would get them ready through his servant John, because God was coming to his people. That is what Zechariah says in verse 68: "*Praise be to the Lord, the God of Israel, because he has come and he has redeemed his people.*" Zechariah talks as though it had already happened, but prophets often talked that way: Something was about to happen and he talked as though it happened already. God was coming. The people need to be ready to receive their God. And that is what John will do – get them ready to receive God.

Is that not what Christmas is? Is it not about God coming to us? The little baby Jesus is not just the child of Mary; he is also the child of God. He is God and man. Do we not celebrate that God has come? Our focus, then, should not be on the presents we will give to others, but the gift God has given to us. The angel said, "*To you is born this day in the city of David, a Saviour who is Christ the Lord.*"

He will grow up and then the people of God will have to deal with Jesus. John will help get the people ready.

And how will he do that? Read verse 77: he will give "*his people the knowledge of salvation through the forgiveness of their sins.*" That will be a big job because the people did not seem to realize how terrible their sins were. They did not seem to realize that disaster loomed over them, and if they did not confess their sins and have them forgiven, they would be destroyed.

I cannot help but to think about something that happened two or three years ago on the day after Christmas in Indonesia. An earthquake had happened in the ocean. Few people noticed. Nobody realized the danger. They got up, went to the beach, slept in their beds, ate their breakfast, unaware that a huge wave was rolling in from the ocean, 40 feet high, which would kill thousands and thousands of people. If they knew their danger, they could easily have saved themselves. They could have walked to higher ground and been safe. But they did not know. Nobody told them. Nobody warned them. Nobody prepared them for the moment of disaster.

God did not want that to happen to his people. That is why he sent John and his father realized that. John would prepare the people by preaching first to help them realize that their sins against God were very wicked, so that they might repent of it. Then he would tell them about God's love and mercy: He will forgive them

if they repent. He would baptize them in the Jordan River so that they might be assured that their sins really were washed away.

Are you ready for Christmas? Are you ready to meet God?

Gordon Black, for one, says, “Yes, I am ready. Yes, I believe in Jesus.” He said so to Richard and I when we interviewed him: He said “My life depends entirely on him. I need the Lord’s Supper to be a Christian.” Beautiful words of faith: In myself I cannot survive, but my life depends on Jesus Christ. I need to receive him at the Lord’s Supper to be the person God wants me to be.

Gordon will say it publicly today. My dear friends, be encouraged by what God has given to Gordon. God has prepared him through the work of the church, to meet his God, giving him the knowledge of salvation through the forgiveness of his sins.

God’s gift is what it is all about. Not your gifts to friends and family, but God’s gift to you.

Are you ready for Christmas? Hold out your hands and ask, “God may I be ready to receive your Son Jesus Christ, so that through his birth, I may receive new birth in your salvation, and that through his death and resurrection, I might receive the forgiveness of all my sins.”

December 25, 2007  
*Pastor Paul Aasman*

**Luke 2:19** “But Mary treasured up all these things and pondered them in her heart.”

### *Mary Ponders*

Reading: Luke 2:1-20

Text: Luke 2:19

In the space of 9 months, ever since Gabriel the angel had spoken to her, Mary’s life had been completely overturned. She used to live a quiet life, expecting to live a quiet life with her fiancé, Joseph, the humble town carpenter. But now look at her! Some call her “Notre Dame” everywhere in the world.

The facts of the recent past were glorious, unexpected, world-shaking, and many. Mary might be excused if she began to confuse some things, but she must not. What has happened to her is for all ages and all places. Nothing must be forgotten.

So Mary treasures the facts up in the storeroom of her memory. She turned them over in her mind with wonder, amazement and excitement. How will these things turn out?!

But she did not just stack up the facts in her memory, she also pondered on them. The word Luke uses means to throw things together, and when it applies to an activity of the mind, it means to bring facts together. And well she might; she had a lot of facts to bring together.

For Mary must have been very confused and bewildered. When the angel told her she would have a baby, and then Joseph was told to take Mary to be his wife, then naturally, a certain nesting instinct would have struck them. They began to get their home ready in the village of Nazareth. Joseph would have been busy building a crib for the baby, and Mary would have been knitting an afghan.

But then another unexpected thing happened: Caesar's tax roles demanded that Joseph and Mary must travel right away far south to Bethlehem (120 km as the crow flies). Mary was alarmed, but Joseph tried to calm her down: "We'll try to get there well before the baby comes. Don't worry Mary, I'll get things right for you, if I have to build a house for you in Bethlehem myself!"

But things did not work out as expected. Either the trip took longer than they expected, or Mary was gripped by the pains of labour sooner than she expected. What was worse, Bethlehem was crawling with visitors. There was no room left for them, and Mary must have been beside herself with fear. The only friendly gesture came from a farmer: "You can stay the night in my barn."

And that's where Jesus was born - in the barn. It was a rude, lonely and frightening day for Mary and Joseph. But in the end, it was okay. The baby was born. It was a boy, just like the angel said. He was healthy, and don't believe the song which says "no sound did he make." He was a healthy baby, and healthy

babies cry and wail to let mom know he is hungry, soiled, cold, uncomfortable, unhappy, etc.

Mary was able to enjoy that precious moment of peace and tranquillity a woman enjoys after giving birth and all is well. But then gruff voices were heard shouting outside, and before they knew it, rough shepherds come stamping into the barn. "What new terror rises against us? What do they want, Joseph? Send them away!"

But no, they won't be turned. They push their way into the barn telling stories of angels. "Oh Mary," Joseph says, "more angels have appeared!" The angel told the shepherds that Mary's son was not just hers. This child belongs to the angels; this child belongs to the shepherds. This child belongs to all the people!

And all heaven's angels turned out in full force to celebrate the child's birth. Mary's life has been turned upside-down. Why, everything was changing!

But once the story was told out, the shepherds, being permitted to see their child, were persuaded at last to leave, and as their voices faded away to "Hey, you out there, we've seen angels tonight!," Mary stacked up all the facts in her mind and began to try to put them in order, trying to make some sense of them.

What a blessing that God sent to Joseph and Mary the shepherds to help them to see the glory in the shame; that there was purpose in the chaos, agony and terror.

Mary pondered all this in her heart. And she would find herself pondering often about her son, for bigger troubles will come. Simeon said to Mary a few days later, “*A sword will pierce your own soul, too.*” He spoke of the agony Mary would suffer when she learns of her son’s arrest, trial, sentence and execution on the cross. She would see it and wonder, “Where is the glory in this? What possible purpose lies in such horror?”

God’s glory shines more brilliantly in darkness. His love is more glorious against the hatred of man.

On this Christmas day, take courage, my friends. The gloom of confusion, trouble, suffering and loneliness you experience is only the better backdrop against which may shine the glory of God’s love in your life. Don’t despair in the midst of your trouble, but ponder the facts. Think of God’s grace and love. As it did for Mary and Joseph, so it will be for you, for the child born that day was born unto you.

December 30, 2007  
*Pastor Paul Aasman*

**Genesis 32:26b** “But Jacob replied, ‘I will not let you go unless you bless me.’”

### ***Jacob Returns to Canaan***

Reading: Genesis 32:22-32  
Text: Genesis 32:26b

Fear. Jacob is gripped with fear. Many years ago, he had run away from home because Esau his brother was going to kill him. Now he was coming back, and he learned that Esau was coming to meet him, with 400 men at his side. Naturally, Jacob is afraid: “*Save me, I pray, from the hand of my brother Esau, for I am afraid he will come and attack me, and also the mothers with their children.*” (Gen. 32:11)

Jacob has been fighting all his life, but whenever he overcame one thing, something worse would rise up against him. He had fought for and won the blessing from his father Isaac. He had fought for and won his rightful share and more of his labours for father-in-law Laban. Now it looked like he was going to fight for his life.

So, we read in the early part of this chapter that Jacob set apart from his wealth, nine small herds, each one to be a gift for Esau, to satisfy him and turn away his hatred. After that would go his own herds, behind that his wives, children and servants.

After sending all of these groups over the Jordan, Jacob stayed behind for one more night. Probably he wanted to spend the night wrestling with God in prayer. But during the night, a man showed up and attacked Jacob. Jacob defended himself and the two of them fought for a long time. Neither of them could gain the upper hand. Morning was approaching and the stranger wanted to be away, so he did something that showed he was no ordinary

man. He touched Jacob's hip and instantly, Jacob was crippled. He dislocated Jacob's hip by merely touching him.

This man had powers that Jacob was helpless to resist. If he could cripple him with a mere touch, surely, he could kill him as easily. As the pain of his injury shot through his body, he realized that the man he fought with was either an angel of God, or God himself! This is the very one whom he had been asking to help him against Esau. So what does Jacob do? He tried to lock onto the man with all his might. He prayed earnestly and desperately, like Jesus Christ himself who prayed so intently in the garden of Gethsemane, that sweat fell from his forehead like great drops of blood. That's how Jacob had been praying, but he could pray more directly to God. With all his might, he held onto his God and would not let him go: "*I will not let you go unless you bless me*", he said.

This is what deserves our attention. People often seem afraid to struggle with God in prayer. Often people will say, "I don't really believe that God will forgive my sins. How can I be sure that I am saved? How does a person become certain of his own salvation? Am I really one of the elect for whom Christ died? I've sinned so much in my life. Is it possible that God can bless even me?"

If you find yourself asking those kinds of questions, then our passage is very important for you. Jacob challenges you to be

more bold with God, and to stop doubting his love for you. Doubt is for people who do not want God's love badly enough. Sometimes you need to fight for God's love. If you think God is reluctant to give you anything, than take hold of his outstretched hand, and don't let it go until you are blessed. Cling to him with all your might, as Jacob did.

You might just find that what you are struggling against is not God, but your own doubts and your own weak faith.

Next week, we plan to celebrate the Lord's Supper. One thing that the church has done from ancient times is to urge God's people to prepare themselves for the Lord's Supper by asking, "Am I worthy to receive the body and blood of the Lord Jesus Christ for the forgivingness of my sins?"

Don't be afraid. Be like Jacob who fought against anything that might stand between him and his God. He would even fight with God to keep hold of his love. You can do so even more confidently because Jesus Christ has shown how great God's love is. Ask God for anything at all, in Jesus' name, and God will do it for you, for Jesus' sake.

Through boldness and by struggling with God in prayer, we can overcome whatever might cause us fear. May the peace of Jesus Christ, which transcends all understanding, guard your soul.