

TAKE TIME OUT – *Pastoral Retreat*

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Sunday Scriptures: 10th January 2021

Genesis 1:1-8 *In the beginning:...* GOD!

¹In the beginning when God created the heavens and the earth, ²the earth was a formless void and darkness covered the face of the deep, while a wind from God swept over the face of the waters. ³Then God said: 'Let there be light'; and there was light. ⁴And God saw that the light was good; and God separated the light from the darkness. ⁵God called the light day, and the darkness He called night. And there was evening and there was morning, the first day.

Reflection:

On the very first day of the universe God shone Light into the darkness and began to create the object of His love. How awesome to consider that God knew us even before He began His creation. God conceived a plan and began building with a definite blueprint in mind and we were the focus of all that He made. God knew what we would need and set about providing it and making it perfect before He breathed life into us. If God had made us first we would have perished before we began, having no habitat to sustain life. But God knew what shape and form we would take, making sure all things were perfect for us to enjoy. Only then did He make us, give us life and place us in the Garden of Eden. How sad then to know that the first of our kind betrayed the love of God through disobedience. What sorrow God must have felt; what grief He must have borne to discover that betrayal. What anger He must have known against the one who sought to destroy the object of His love by such despicable lies. "God saw that the Light was good" but even then, right at the beginning, evil lurked in the dark shadows of the void brooding with envy. How sobering it is to consider the malicious intent of the 'serpent' in God's perfect garden. How subtle its deception, how skilful its manipulation of the object of God's love, and how spiteful its vengeance.

What for God is the object of His love, is for evil the object of its hate. Satan seeks only to destroy what is good and right before God, simply because evil pursues complete domination. This is the simplicity of attack that never changes; control and power through lies and manipulation to achieve sovereignty over all. How many despots do we continue to see in our lifetime adopting the self-same tactics to achieve dominance? The process of evil is laid out in **Genesis 3:1-8** and can be seen in every dictator since that day. It begins by sowing the seeds of doubt, 'Did God say?' (v1) then outright lie, 'You will not die' (v4). This is followed up with misrepresentation, 'You will be like God, knowing good and evil' (v5). This subtle process is designed to distort the Truth of God's Word and advocate wrongdoing as if it were right! How many have been persuaded to follow a wrong path for, 'all the right reasons' at some point in their lives? Evil does not jump out in a red suit with horns and a pointy tail advertising its intention! The devil is a master of deception, slithering along hidden beneath the long grass waiting to trip up God's good people at every opportunity. Fake news is nothing new! Like the saying, 'all that glitters is not gold' so we must beware, 'all that presents as good is not necessarily right'.

The words of Minnie Haskin are often quoted at the beginning of a New Year and her poem is often called "The Gate of the Year". However, Minnie Haskin entitled it "God Knows" and it

is much longer than the opening phrases often quoted (included in full below). It is good to remind ourselves that God is always watching and ever mindful of us. Whatever our resolutions; whatever our circumstance; whatever our thoughts, words or actions:... God always knows! Whatever evil comes against us; whatever deception we are subjected to; whatever reasonable persuasion seeks to distort Truth:... God always knows! The question is, do we? The devil seeks to usurp God from His rightful place of sovereign authority, but evil can never distort those who remain obedient to God. Out of a formless void God created beauty, diversity and order specifically for our enjoyment. Out of darkness God created Light for us to see good from bad, right from wrong. Our eyes have been opened from the time Adam and Eve hid from God because of a guilty conscience. If we have not already realised that we are the object of God's love, then it is time we did!

This is the beginning of a new year after a most unprecedented year of suffering and sorrow. Make no mistake; God would not cause the destruction of His beloved children. God loves us and the devil hates us! Disease is maliciously imposed by evil design to destroy the object of God's love. So then, let us not be deceived but instead pray for discernment; turn away from the deceptions of world view and back toward the creator of all things. Let us rejoice in the One who loves us and made us, the One and only True God who sent His Son as the perfect sacrifice to overturn the serpent's evil. Let us resolve to follow the example of Jesus Christ our Lord, the Light of the world, Whom evil cannot abide. We have a Saviour who exposes corruption and protects our soul; a Spirit who inspires and guides our way and a heavenly Father who delivers His promises. God will renew and revive because God knows!

Hymn/Song:

CD: More Best Worship Songs...ever! **Disc 2: Track 8:**

As Sure as Gold is Precious 'Revival' – Robin Mark *Can be found in SoF 1176 & YouTube*

As sure as gold is precious and the honey sweet,
So You love this city and You love these streets.
Every child out playing by their own front door;
Every baby lying on the bedroom floor.

Every dreamer dreaming in her dead-end job;
Every driver driving through the rush hour mob.
I feel it in my spirit, feel it in my bones,
You're going to send revival,
Bring them all back home.

Chorus:

*I can hear that thunder in the distance,
Like a train on the edge of the town;
I can feel the brooding of Your Spirit:
'Lay your burdens down, lay your burdens down.'*

From the preacher preaching when the well is dry,
To the lost soul reaching for a higher high.
From the young man working through his hopes and fears,
To the widow walking through the vale of tears.

Every man and woman, every old and young;
Every father's daughter, every mother's son.
I feel it in my spirit, feel it in my bones,
You're going to send revival,
Bring them all back home.

Chorus:...

*Revive us, revive us,
Revive us with Your fire!*
(Repeat)

Poem: GOD KNOWS *By Minnie Haskin*

And I said to the man who stood at the gate of the year:
"Give me a light that I may tread safely into the unknown."
And he replied:
"Go out into the darkness and put your hand into the Hand of God.
That shall be to you better than light and safer than a known way."
So I went forth, and finding the Hand of God, trod gladly into the night.
And He led me towards the hills and the breaking of day in the lone East.

*So heart be still:
What need our little life
Our human life to know,
If God hath comprehension?
In all the dizzy strife
Of things both high and low,
God hideth His intention.*

*God knows. His will is best.
The stretch of years
Which wind ahead, so dim
To our imperfect vision,
Are clear to God.
Our fears are premature;
In Him, all time hath full provision.*

*Then rest: until
God moves to lift the veil
From our impatient eyes,
When, as the sweeter features
Of Life's stern face we hail,
Fair beyond all surmise
God's thought around His creatures
Our mind shall fill.*

Prayer: Dear God, Creator of all things, Father to all; give us Light. Dear Jesus, Son of God, Light to the world; lead the way. Dear Spirit, Breath of God, power of God; open our eyes to the Truth that saves. Father, Son and Holy Spirit, renew and revive us we pray. **Amen!**
