

# LOOK BEYOND

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As Christmas draws near and we look back on 2020 all of us recognize that it's been a dark and dreadful year for friends and family alike. Many of us have suffered the loss of a loved one, from Covid-19 or other causes, and been denied the opportunity for a proper wake and funeral service. Millions have lost their jobs due to the shutdown of the economy, and uncounted numbers of small business owners have seen their life's work destroyed. Families struggle to make ends meet on a daily basis, made even worse at Christmas. None of this can be denied or dismissed.

For many of us, however, there are signs of hope and encouragement out there that may help carry us through to the end of this deadly pandemic. The vaccine is now available for those who need it most of all. It's being produced in such large quantities that millions of Americans will have access to it in the weeks and months ahead. Doctors are learning more every day about how best to treat persons afflicted with the virus. Small business proprietors are implementing clever ways to open their doors without breaking the rules of their authoritarian governors and mayors.

All of this will take time, and Americans have used up much of their short supply of patience over the last ten months. Recognizing that we cannot get back to normal as long as there are workplaces that are locked down, we have prepared messages of hope, guidance, or warning to help Americans look beyond their present miseries to the day when they are grateful again for their many blessings. Most of the messages come from the Holy Scriptures, others from the wisdom of the ages. Let all of us hold fast to these messages just as the boy who takes his brand new Red Rider bb gun to bed with him Christmas night.

*Law Enforcement.* "Blessed are the peacemakers; they shall be called sons of God."

*School Teachers.* "Let the children come to me. Do not hinder them. The Kingdom of God belongs to such as these."

*Active Duty Military.* “Peace on earth, goodwill toward men.”

*Families.* Look to the star shining over the stable in Bethlehem where you will find a poor family, at the same time a model family.

*Believers.* “I will not abandon you.”

*Restaurant and Small Business Owners.* “O Lord, hear my prayer, and let my cry come to you. Hide not your face from me in the days of my distress.”

*Food Banks.* “All those present ate their fill. The fragments remaining, when gathered up, filled twelve baskets. Those who ate were about five thousand, not counting women and children.”

*Wealthy.* “I want you to observe that this poor widow contributed more than all the others who donated to the treasury. They gave from their surplus wealth, but she gave from her want, all that she had to live on.”

*Powerless.* “If you live in me, and my words stay part of you, you may ask what you will – it will be done for you.”

*Powerful.* “I assure you, unless you change and become like little children, you will not enter the kingdom of God. Whoever makes himself lowly, becoming like this child, is of greatest importance in the heavenly reign.”

*Social Media.* “Be on your guard against false prophets, who come to you in sheep’s clothing but underneath are wolves on the prowl. You will know them by their deeds.”

*Public Health Authorities.* “Instruct me, O Lord, in the way of your statutes, that I may exactly observe them. Give me discernment, that I may observe your law and keep it with all my heart.”

*Elected Officials.* “If you can trust a man in little things, you can also trust him in greater; while anyone unjust in a slight matter is also unjust in greater.”

*Death Row Inmates.* “Jesus, remember me when you enter upon your reign” ... “I assure you this day you will be with me in paradise.”

*Teenagers.* A good man or woman is better than a great one.

*Prostitutes Reaching Out for Forgiveness.* “I came to your home and you provided me with no water for my feet. She has washed my feet with her tears and wiped them with her hair. You gave me no kiss, but she has not ceased kissing my feet since I entered. You did not anoint my head with oil, but she has anointed my feet with perfume. I tell you, that is why her many sins are forgiven – because of her great love. Little is forgiven the one whose love is small.”

*Homeless.* “Have pity on me, O Lord, for I am languishing; heal me, O Lord, for my body is in terror; My soul, too, is utterly terrified; but you, O Lord, how long ...?”

*Clergy.* “I am the good shepherd. I know my sheep and my sheep know me in the same way that the Father knows me and I know the Father; for these sheep I will give my life.”

*Linemen.* “I am a lineman for the county and I drive the main road. Searchin’ in the sun for another overload. I hear you singing in the wire. I can hear you through the whine. And the Wichita lineman is still on the line.”

Let us all hope and pray that good men and women will emerge from the summer of our discontent who understand instinctively that America cannot survive on despair, greed, envy, lies, hatred, and power over others. Who are willing to stand up and make the personal sacrifices necessary to reawaken America to hope, moderation, generosity, truth, love, and freedom.

