

Console Me, Lord

“**God will wipe away every tear from their eyes**”
(Revelation 7:17).

Scripture: Revelation 7:4-17

Song: “O the Deep, Deep Love of Jesus”

“Nana! Nana! Nana!” my 18-month-old granddaughter called out through her tears. No, she wasn’t asking for *me*. She wanted the banana she saw on the counter. I buckled Taylor into her highchair, partially peeled the fruit, and handed it to her. For a moment, Taylor was happy. Then, the tears started again. She’d reached the top of the peel. I fully peeled the banana and handed the remaining fruit back to her. Immediately, her tears started again in earnest. She wanted me to put the peel back on. I sighed. There are some things I can’t do, no matter how much I long to quell Taylor’s tears.

Unlike me, God can do the impossible. But even *He* doesn’t stop all our tears from flowing in this life. Our hearts still break at times, and our tears still fall. But God has promised that there will come a time when hunger, thirst, and even death will be no more. On that day, our tears truly will be wiped away.

Until then, we never have to cry alone. God sees every tear that falls. In times of heartbreak, we can find comfort in His companionship as He leads us on a path toward hope and healing.

Father, thank You that You’re always near and that You care about what breaks my heart. In Jesus’ name, amen.

June 26–July 2. **Vicki Kuyper** lives in Colorado and spends most of her time writing, exploring God’s wonderful world, and helping care for her three granddaughters.

Quench Your Soul

“Come, all you who are thirsty, come to the waters”
(Isaiah 55:1).

Scripture: Isaiah 55

Song: “Come to the Waters”

For about six hours each day, Meliyio walked the same well-worn path to and from her Kenyan village. For half of her journey, she carried about 20 liters of fresh water, a load of 40 pounds. But she was a mother with six children, and her family really needed 40 liters of water a day. Sometimes she had help. Sometimes her family went thirsty. Thankfully, an aid organization dug a well nearby, reducing Meliyio’s 15-mile trek to less than a mile. Just having accessible clean water transformed the lives of Meliyio and her family. Nearly one billion people around the world struggle to have access to fresh water. This isn’t a matter of convenience. It’s a matter of life and death.

Having access to “living water” is a matter of spiritual life and death. But, thanks to God’s love and grace, His presence and provision are always close at hand. His gift of living water flows from a well that never runs dry.

However, our spiritual thirst isn’t always as obvious as physical thirst. It can easily be mistaken for feelings of anxiety, isolation, or a desire to strive to do better or to own more. That’s why it’s so important to drink large, cooling draughts of God’s Word. It helps keep us spiritually hydrated and thinking straight.

Father, I know my spiritual thirst cannot be quenched by anything other than You. Remind me to draw close to You each day through Scripture and prayer. In Jesus’ name, amen.

The Sound of Heaven

[Daniel wrote,] “Before me was one like a son of man, coming with the clouds of heaven. . . . All nations and peoples of every language worshiped him” (Daniel 7:13-14).

Scripture: Daniel 7:1-14

Song: “O for a Thousand Tongues”

More than a thousand voices, representing over 70 nations, were joined together under one roof to worship God. My own voice was almost inaudible as my tears flowed freely. Although we were singing in different languages, our individual voices joined seamlessly, creating one harmonious refrain. I thought, *This is the closest to Heaven I’ve ever been!* But there was one group of voices missing. At this international Christian event in Beijing, government regulations prohibited Chinese nationals from taking part. I felt their absence deeply.

Although memories of that Sunday morning in China’s capital will always feel a bit sacred to me, it was also a reflection of our imperfect world. Some of God’s children weren’t present, weren’t allowed to join in. However, in both Old and New testaments—in Psalm 86:9 and Revelation 15:4, for example—we read that one day all nations will worship together before the Lord.

Until then, we can reflect God’s heart by aligning our view of God’s family with His Word. Like any family, God’s is made up of unique individuals. As brothers and sisters in Christ, although we are not likely to see things in exactly the same way (see Romans 14), we can welcome one another with open arms and open hearts.

Father, reveal any ungodly prejudice or judgment that may be hiding in my heart, and help me to root it out. In Jesus’ name, amen.

Carrying Everything in Prayer

In every situation, . . . with thanksgiving, present your requests to God (Philippians 4:6).

Scripture: Philippians 4:4-9

Song: “What a Friend We Have in Jesus”

When Joseph M. Scriven penned the words to “What a Friend We Have in Jesus,” the Irishman was well-acquainted with the burden of pain and grief and the need for divine comfort. The night before his wedding, his fiancée drowned in a tragic accident. Afterward, he immigrated to Canada, where he became a minister and teacher. A few years later, he was engaged once more. But tragedy struck a second time. Shortly before the wedding, his fiancée became ill and died. Scriven spent his remaining years ministering to the poor, earning him the simple nickname, the Good Man. Although he published a book of 71 hymns in 1869, “What a Friend We Have in Jesus” was not included. It had been a personal poem he’d sent to his ailing mother back in Ireland. Yet it later became Scriven’s most well-known work.

We, too, have a friend in Jesus. We can talk to God the Father through the Son about anything and everything. However, in today’s passage Paul instructs us to do more than just petition God with our wants and needs. He tells us to offer Him thanks at the same time.

In our struggles it can be hard to feel thankful. But remembering that God is always listening, loving, and actively providing peace and comfort helps us remain grateful for such a friend.

Father, thank You for the gift of Your presence and the provision of prayer. In Jesus’ name, amen.

Re-Creation

Then I [John] saw “a new heaven and a new earth”
(Revelation 21:1).

Scripture: Revelation 21:1-14

Song: “This Is My Father’s World”

It was the first time any human had seen a view of Earth from the orbit of another planet. On December 24, 1968, as astronauts Frank Borman, James Lovell, and William Anders watched Earth ascend above the surface of the moon, Anders captured the moment on film. His image *Earthrise* became one of the most famous photographs of all time. As an estimated one billion people—more than a quarter of the world’s population—listened to a live broadcast, the three astronauts celebrated that first Christmas Eve in space by reading aloud the first 10 verses of Genesis 1, starting with, “In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth.”

While Borman, Lovell, and Anders were the first people to see the entire planet from the vantage of the heavens, the apostle John was possibly the first person to catch a glimpse of the “new heaven and new earth” that God promises in the book of Revelation. Although no one fully understands all of what John describes in his vision, one thing is certain: God promises that one day, everything will be new once more.

As ones who have entrusted ourselves to Christ for salvation, we have the sure hope of enjoying God’s redemptive renewal for all eternity! Thanks and praise be to God for the promise of a glorious re-creation!

Father, thank You for being my Creator and the one who makes everything new. I praise You for the blessed hope I have because of You. In Jesus’ name, amen.

God's Unshakable Presence

I did not see a temple in the city, because the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are its temple (Revelation 21:22).

Scripture: Revelation 21:15-27

Song: “Rock of Ages”

I felt out of place as I approached the Western Wall at the Temple Mount in Jerusalem. I'm not Jewish, but the significance of standing before this remnant that once surrounded the site of Herod's temple left me feeling humbled and small. For thousands of years, people have worshiped God near where I stood. And since the sixteenth century, visitors have written prayers on slips of paper and placed them within the cracks of the 62-foot wall. Today more than a million notes are left each year. But rather than putting my prayer in writing, I simply spoke to God from my heart, thanking Him for His presence in my life.

King Solomon built Jerusalem's first temple near this spot almost 3,000 years ago. It was destroyed by the Babylonians in 586 BC. The temple was rebuilt in 515 BC, and Herod the Great reconstructed the temple yet again, beginning in 19 BC. Less than 100 years later, the Romans destroyed that temple, leaving intact only part of its retaining wall—the Western Wall.

God's Word reminds us that, one day, everything on earth will be destroyed (2 Peter 3:10-13). But God himself remains steadfast. We don't need a physical temple or prayer slips to communicate with God today, and what a joy it is to know that a day is coming when we'll worship Him face-to-face.

Father, I will worship You freely and frequently until the day I see Your face. In Jesus' name, amen.

Jewels in the Making

[God's people] will sparkle in his land like jewels in a crown (Zechariah 9:16).

Scripture: Zechariah 9:9-17

Song: "Something Beautiful"

For almost a decade, one of the world's largest star sapphires was used as a doorstep. When 12-year-old Roy Spencer brought home the half-pound stone, his father thought it was just an oversized chunk of black crystal, so he put it by the back door and went on struggling to make ends meet in the outback of Queensland, Australia. But in 1947, the Kazanjian brothers—jewelers from Los Angeles—saw beyond the stone's rough exterior, recognizing the rare gem hidden within. They purchased the stone from the family for \$18,000. Today, the Black Star of Queensland is worth an estimated \$9.7 million.

Throughout the Bible, God uses metaphors to describe His people. He compares them to things such as clay (Isaiah 64:8), salt (Matthew 5:13), sheep (Psalm 100:3), and in today's passage, jewels. Jeweler Harry Kazanjian cut away 400 carats of the Spencers' rough stone to allow the remaining 733 carats to shine. The jeweler's skilled, meticulous work not only increased the gemstone's beauty but also its value.

God's skillful, loving hands work similarly in our lives. Like the Black Star of Queensland, we require some fashioning, some chiseling away of our fleshly desires, as the Lord sanctifies us for His purposes. God has the ability to turn our painful trials into sparkling facets that display His beauty in and through us.

Father, help me to trust You during times of painful struggle and loss. I want my life to display Your workmanship, to Your praise and glory. In Jesus' name, amen.