

40 Days of **ADVENT 2025**

A Devotional of the Mustard Seed Street Church with
the Ramblings of Rev. Gipp Forster

A photograph of four lit candles in an Advent wreath. The candles are white and lit, with a warm glow. They are surrounded by greenery, pine needles, and small gold and red ornaments. The background is dark, making the candles stand out.

PART 1:
November 15 – December 4

About this Project

This year marks the 50th year of ministry and service for the Mustard Seed Street Church in Victoria, BC. We are thankful for the supportive involvement of the Canadian Baptists of Western Canada from our inception in April 1975.

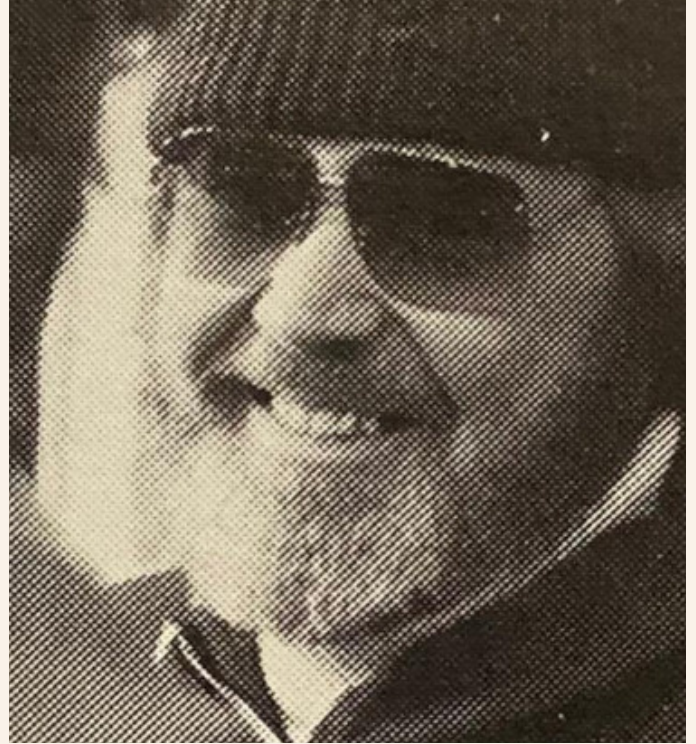
We are grateful for the partnership of the CBWC in the completion of this Advent devotional series project which spotlights the written ramblings of our founder, Rev. Gipp Forster, while encouraging our hearts closer to Christ in celebration of his birth.

Gipp Forster

Gipp was a poet—he traveled and wandered around sharing his poetry wherever he went. He even recorded some of his early works into albums on vinyl records. It was in the mid-60s at a Billy Graham Crusade in Vancouver, BC that Gipp met Jesus Christ and began life again following Him. This encounter with Christ—following years of wandering—awakened within him new creative inspiration.

The Early Mustard Seed

By the mid-70s, Gipp was a business owner in downtown Victoria. He owned a poster shop on Government Street. One day, a prayer stool was dropped off at his little storefront, perhaps by someone thinking that his was a pawn shop. He kept the prayer stool and created a space for it in a closet under a stairwell. It wasn't long before community began to form there—a prayerful Spirit-led community whose heart was to serve the people of Victoria's inner-city. Gipp's poster shop was the first place to hold the gathering of people known as the Mustard Seed Street Church.



The Ramblings

Gipp loved Christmas at least as much as he cherished writing. His writing had an interesting way about it—a rambling style that was raw and rapid and contained a massive depth of thought-provoking content. I remember seeing him in his office, cigarette smoke floating in dim light as he wrote his pages. So many of his thousands of stories were about Jesus—his birth, death and resurrection. Gipp also wrote of inner-city street life and the people who touched his life there. He wrote of the people who reminded him of his faith in Christ, of authenticity, and what Love honestly lived looks like. Gipp met Jesus there.

The Mustard Seed...Today

The Mustard Seed Street Church has experienced wonderful growth over the years. With millions of pounds of food being distributed annually, our Food Security ministry reaches tens of thousands in the city, while partnering with over 80 different agencies. Our Market on Queens Avenue serves all in need, from families and children to the unhoused and refugees, offering a choice-based experience highlighting healthy options and fresh produce rescued from local supermarkets. Our Hospitality ministry offers a safe space where our community may not only feel welcome to enjoy nutritious meals and take part in life-giving programs but also pursue a deeper sense of belonging and find opportunities to nurture a closer relationship with Jesus Christ.

How to Read the Devotions

Before beginning, close your eyes and take a few deep breaths. This can be a time to slow down and center life again in Christ. A quiet breath prayer or Jesus prayer—simple words of preparation—may be a good entryway to the reading.

Celtic Tradition

From the 6th century, Celtic Christians have celebrated the nativity of Jesus Christ for 40 days before Christmas, mirroring the Lenten season ending with Good Friday and Easter. Celtic believers met together from November 15th to December 24th, with an attitude of reverence and preparation (in scripture “40 days” holds symbolic significance). May we, too, enter the story of Nativity with such preparation this year.

The Scripture

A portion of scripture is included for you to read from your bible followed by a focus verse. If another verse from the scripture passage pops out at you or comes to mind elsewhere, jot it down.

The Ramblings

Each of the Ramblings included in the Advent devotional were chosen from thousands of Gipp’s ramblings written during his time in ministry with the Mustard Seed. The ramblings were written in a way to be read on a popular local radio station in the Victoria area, CFAX 1070, in the mid-80s. His traditional sign-off and variations thereof are included with each of the ramblings, “I’m Gipp Forster of the Mustard Seed, I’m a Street Pastor.”

Going Deeper

If you have the time to go deeper with the devotional on a given day, this is it. The questions may generate deeper personal spiritual revelations, and it may be good practice to keep a journal nearby to keep notes. These devotions are also suitable to be shared in a small group setting, and the questions may generate good contemplative conversation.

The Closing Prayer

This is a guiding prayer, a closing prayer to complete the study, and a unifying prayer for all partaking in the devotion for the day. This prayer can be an entry point, or closing point to an open community prayer shared in the space of a group.

Dear Reader,

As you embark on this journey of 40 days of preparation for the Nativity of our Lord and Savior, and as you near the day of His coming, please know that we are blessed that you would choose to partake in this Advent journey with us.

From the community of the Mustard Seed Street Church to you and yours, a very Merry Christmas and Happy New Year!

2025 ADVENT DAY ONE

November 15

Scripture Reading: Luke 2:8-20

"Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace among those whom He favours!"

Luke 2:14

Gipp's Ramblings Number 413, 1984

If I had to choose one Christmas out of my album of memories to celebrate with the same joy and meaning, it would have to be the Christmas of 1960. There was no family, save that of a bunch of us who gathered to make our own. No tree, no stocking, no gifts gaily wrapped.

Only five people filled with the loneliness of memory, who gazed intently and silently over the invisible miles of distance, imagining being home for Christmas. We had no money, no food, no promise, except that of our need for one another.

Suddenly, Jack took off his buckskin vest, which I had admired for so long and handed it to me with a shy smile. Sandy removed her earrings and gave them to Shirley without a word, while Mark took the last of his cigarettes and spread them out on the floor for all to share.

I took off my worn, experienced cowboy boots and smiled as I pushed them over to Jack. Shirley gave Mark her wooden flute, and Mark gave Sandy his metal ring.

Then we hugged and cried and heard 'Silent Night' being played in some unknown place. And for some reason, we did something we'd never done before. We quietly prayed and each, in his private silence, discovered the meaning of Christmas.

I'm Gipp Forster and I'm a street pastor. From the Mustard Seed to you, a very Merry Christmas.

Going Deeper

Christmas can hold many memories for us, good and bad. Also, Christmas can be a reminder for us of the Love of God, and ways that we can be involved in the expression of His Love in the world. So, what does Christmas mean to you?

It is good to be creative with our generosity in the consideration as to how we can give to those we care about this Christmas. Is there something special you would like to do this Christmas to make it a little more 'glorious'?

As a gift to yourself to encourage and prepare your heart this Season of Advent, can you commit to taking the time to read, ponder and pray with this devotional for the next 40 days?

Closing Prayer

Creator God, thank You for being so close to us, and for all that You give to us. Thank you for providing for us, enough even for each of us to consider creatively how we can share with one another. Help us to let go more, and in our letting go may our Love for You be magnified. In the Name of Jesus, through Whom may we come to know the Generosity of Heaven even more this Advent season, Amen.

2025 ADVENT DAY TWO

November 16

Scripture Reading: Matthew 1:18-25

"But just when he had resolved to do this, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, 'Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary as your wife, for the child conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit.'"

Matthew 1:20

Gipp's Ramblings Number 421, 1984

Billy said his prayers, then snuggled under the delicious warmth of the blankets and down comforter of his safe bed. He watched the shadows of the snowflakes dance across his wall and ceiling, reflected by the streetlight outside his windows. "Happy Birthday!" he whispered... sinking deeper into the softness of his familiar bed.

Sleep took him then, and he dreamed. He was in a stable, and in the stable was a manger, and in the manger was a Child. It was cold and lonely there, and he longed for his own bed, but he could not tear himself away from the scene he found himself part of.

Without thinking, he lifted the Child from His crude crib, looked at the young mother imploringly, and when in mildness she nodded, still in a dream, he returned to his own room.

There he put the Child in his own bed and crawled in beside Him. His dream ended then, and he simply slept as only a child can. In the morning, he awoke to excitement, and it was only after the tree had been explored one more time and all of his gifts had been opened that he remembered the dream.

He ran to inspect what had been so real; on the pillow next to his was a tiny indent as though a small head had rested there, and beneath the covers was a cloth, like a swaddling cloth, that had not been there before.

He smiled, then ran to play with his new toys as meaning became part of a dream that told him the truth of Christmas.

I'm Gipp Forster and I'm a street pastor. From the Mustard Seed to you, a very Merry Christmas.

Going Deeper

There are many blessings found in both today's scripture and Gipp's Ramblings. Take a minute to review and consider the blessing of Christ in your life. What are the blessings of the Nativity scene that stand out to you?

One of the biggest messages in this devotion is to "not be afraid." how does this invitation and assuring presence in the message of the angel speak to you? Is there a particular Christmas blessing that comes to mind for you? Perhaps, an encounter with Christ at this time that we remember His birth that was like a gift-to-remember for your life?

Closing Prayer

Creator God, thank You for being so close to us, and for all that You give to us. Thank you for providing for us, enough even for each of us to consider creatively how we can share with one another. Help us to let go more, and in our letting go may our Love for You be magnified. In the Name of Jesus, through Whom may we come to know the Generosity of Heaven even more this Advent season, Amen.

2025 ADVENT DAY THREE

November 17

Scripture Reading: Psalm 139

"For it was you who formed my inward parts; you knit me together in my mother's womb. I praise you, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made." Psalm 139:13-14

Gipp's Ramblings Number 380, 1984

The other day, I asked a friend who identifies as a street person, "If you had three wishes...what would they be?"

Now, this young friend had recently tried to take his own life, and as I watched him ponder my question, I tried to guess at his wishes. I thought money most certainly for he lived from hand to mouth, and he had, all his life. Success for sure, for he needed to be noticed and wanted to be believed in. Happiness was a must, for he had known little joy in his twenty-three years.

After a very long pause, I could see the tears in his eyes. He looked at me in such a way that I was ashamed of my plenty. He said quietly, "I can only think of two wishes that I would wish."

"And what are those?" I said gently, afraid to offend the depths of his eyes.

"The first," he said, "Would be for a family. I've never had one. I've known group homes and foster homes since I was a baby, but never a family."

"The second would be for a career so that I could give something and not always be taking. Then I could have a family of my own and take care of them."

"With those two, there'd be no need for a third wish."

I couldn't speak at first. I thought of my own bounty of family and profession, which I took so often for granted.

And as I continued to meet with him, I knew I would draw him close to what I had of family and inspiration, and that I would help him to build a future so that he could have what he wished for.

I'm Gipp Forster of the Mustard Seed. I'm a street pastor.

Going Deeper

- If you could have three wishes, what would they be?
- It may be that we already have what is most important to life. What questions arise within for you through the reading of this rambling?
- How can opening our lives to one another in community be both encouragement and blessing?

Closing Prayer

God, you know our hearts and the spaces of our lives that feel empty. Help us to encourage one another toward you and the experience of Hope, even that You have a good plan for our lives. We all need to know of Your loving presence at times, and You can come to us compassionately in our more desolate times, even in our open arms toward one another. Thank You Jesus, for living out Grace for all creation through Your Life; in Your Name we pray, Amen.

2025 ADVENT DAY FOUR

November 18

Scripture Reading: Psalm 84

"Happy are those whose strength is in You, in whose heart are the highways to Zion." Psalm 84:5

Gipp's Ramblings Number 229, 1984

I have walked many roads in my travels, and on these roads, I have met many people with no home, wandering in search of a place but never seeming to find one. I identify with them, for I, too, once wandered like them.

I have also met strangers, and I guess my heart goes out to them the most, for I know what it's like to be a stranger. A stranger is lonely, for a stranger is away from home and remembers that which was good and lasting.

But now I am a pilgrim in search of a city. I walk a highway filled with other pilgrims who sing a song of joy and of homecoming. For a pilgrim is one who is on their way home, much like the prodigal, and they know their father awaits them with open arms and celebration.

I'm Gipp Forster of the Mustard Seed. I'm a street pastor.

Going Deeper

- Along the journey of life, Gipp mentions feeling like a fugitive and transient, a stranger and pilgrim. Can you recall being able to identify in such ways at any time in your life?
- What are the blessings that have met with you as a pilgrim on path for Zion?
- The road to Jesus for each believer is unique and personal for every believer. Is there a pilgrimage that you can perceive in these days leading up to Christmas?

Closing Prayer

Heavenly Father, I acknowledge that my strength comes from You. Guide me to walk in Your ways and set my heart on Your will. Even in the face of challenges, help me to see the blessings You lay on my path as I find joy in Your forever presence. Thank you for being with us, beside us, within us. Forever and always, in Jesus Name, amen.

2025 ADVENT DAY FIVE

November 19

Scripture Reading: Ephesians 1:1-14

"Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places, just as He chose us in Christ before the foundation of the world to be holy and blameless before Him in love." Ephesians 1:3-4

Gipp's Ramblings Number 4, 1983

Once there was a man who had lost his wife in a car accident. He had two children, one of whom had fled to the street and became a heroin addict. The other child, with Down's Syndrome, remained at home.

This man lost his job because of illness and, within a year, lost his house. Bill collectors threatened to sue him, and he depended on Social Services to support him and his intellectually disabled daughter. This man was a Christian and did odd jobs around his church, cheerfully and seemingly without bitterness. He would always whistle as he worked.

One day, the minister asked him how he could be so cheerful while everything he loved and cherished was crumbling around him.

The man looked at him gently and with great wisdom and said, "I have seen many times in the Bible where it says, 'It came to pass'. But I have not found one place where it ever says, 'It came to stay'."

My name is Gipp Forster. I serve at the Mustard Seed and am a street pastor.

Going Deeper

- Sometimes, when we consider our walk with God, we want to focus only on the joy and happiness but, as Gipp's Rambling reminds us, part of our walk in life is that bad things happen.
- Can you think of a time in your past when something bad happened but now, with the benefit of hindsight, you can see a blessing?
- Paul reminds us that in all things we are blessed. As you take this moment to recall the blessings embedded in this challenging moment of your life, what feelings arise?
- Perhaps, there is a challenge before you, this day. How can our prayers center with Hope in the One who loves us, who puts and keeps 'all things together for good, for those who love Him and are called according to His purpose' (Romans 8)?

Closing Prayer

Praise be to You, God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. Thank You for blessing us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ. Thank You for Your Love, and that we can trust You, that we will not have to face anything too difficult, and that You are with us. Knowing this truth can help us to walk through out tough moments with You, even this day. In Jesus' Name, amen

2025 ADVENT DAY SIX

November 20

Scripture Reading: Matthew 6

"Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust consume and where thieves break in and steal, but store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust consumes and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also." Matthew 6:19-21

Gipp's Ramblings Number 155, 1984

We have all heard the saying that "Charity begins at home." I suppose this is true in many cases, but I also believe that charity begins where it is most needed. To buy a new boat while our neighbour goes hungry hardly seems right to me. I'm just as guilty as the next, and I must search my own soul for the answer and not point at others in self-righteousness.

I have no justification for the baubles of this world that I have, but between God and me, I know my excuses are drowned in my own lie. I have seen old age pensioners give five dollars to a charity when their pension cheque can not even come close to feeding them. Or a family who cannot give their own kids gifts for Christmas find an extra dollar to give to a needy family. I look at the plenty I am surrounded with, and I am ashamed of my own greed and plastic caring.

Jesus said, "Do not store away for yourselves things on earth that rust and corrode... but rather store away things in Heaven that do not rust and corrode." I have found comfort on this earth in material things, but I must wonder if it will be the same when I meet my God face to face. I fall short of the mark, and my guilt is like a spiritual cancer. I think it's time I seek a healing. I think it's time I get my priorities straight.

I'm Gipp Forster of the Mustard Seed... I'm a street pastor.

Going Deeper

- Many of us love to collect, sometimes books, or shoes, or tools, sometimes words of affirmation, or words of doubt. Collecting is a natural human response, and often a beautiful blessing, that helps us put order in our world.
- Is this the kind of 'storing up of treasures' that the scripture and Gipp are talking about in this devotion?
- When, in your opinion, does collecting treasures start to become a problem in our lives?
- We are asked to store up our treasures in heaven. What do you think that means?

Closing Prayer

Lord, help me to focus on storing up treasures in heaven, where they will not be corrupted or stolen. Guide me to make choices that align with Your will and to invest in what truly matters, like love, kindness, and compassion. Remind me always that You are the Guide that helps me keep my priorities straight. Amen.

2025 ADVENT DAY SEVEN

November 21

Scripture Reading: 1 Kings 8

"Blessed be the Lord, who has given rest to His people Israel according to all that He promised; not one word has failed of all His good promise that He spoke through his servant Moses... Therefore, devote yourselves completely to the Lord our God, walking in His statutes and keeping His commandments, as at this day."

1 Kings 8:56,61

Gipp's Ramblings Number 123, 1985

He was just an old mangy dog who had seen better days. It had probably been cute as a puppy, just like most of us are when we were babies. But now he was just a landing field for fleas, too big for a lap, too scruffy to ever look neat, sitting mournfully outside of a small restaurant, waiting for his master or mistress on a mild Friday afternoon in what Victoria knows as winter.

I stopped across the street from where he sat, and I guess for a moment we communicated, for he sorrowfully turned and looked across at me, and then just sorrowfully looked back into the window where his reason for living sat, maybe enjoying coffee and a doughnut. I was moved by his loyalty, his fierce determination not to let that which he loved out of his sight.

I knew he would gladly die for whomever it was he waited for, lay down his own life to keep his loved one safe. I guess it was his concentration in guarding that which was separated from him by a sheet of glass and a closed door, his frustration of being so limited if danger should threaten that which he guarded, that moved me.

I thought to myself, "If I could be a Christian, so loyal and attentive to my Master, my God, as he was to his, then I might understand true Christianity and the responsibility and love it entails."

Then I went about my mundane chores, knowing I had been to church and saw one of the greatest sermons that had ever been preached by a mangy old dog whose world had stopped in for a coffee.

I'm Gipp Forster of the Mustard Seed... I'm a street pastor.

Going Deeper

- Imagine yourself sitting where Gipp sat and seeing this 'mangy old dog', what would you think? And, just who is this old mangy dog, anyways?
- Could you be as loyal, as devoted to Jesus as this dog is to its master? Why or why not?
- What kind of life is the one that you believe your Master intends for you? This Christmas, may our loyalty to the One we profess to love and serve be clear and create wonder for the world watching around us.

Closing Prayer

Heavenly Father, what a lesson to learn that nothing should be allowed to compete with Christ's exalted position in my life, and no one should ever be elevated above the Lord Jesus. I pray that, day by day, following the Way of Your Son, I will learn of what true loyalty is and live my life to Your glory and honour. In Jesus' name, amen.

2025 ADVENT DAY EIGHT

November 22

Scripture Reading: Matthew 13:24-33

Jesus told the crowds all these things in parables; without a parable He told them nothing. This was to fulfill what had been spoken through the prophet: "I will open my mouth to speak in parables; I will proclaim what has been hidden since the foundation." Matthew 13:34-35

Gipp's Ramblings Number 31, 1984

Oh, how I long to wander with Jesus down the streets of Jerusalem to traipse across the hills of Galilee, to be with Him in a boat or sitting beside it on some mountain as He tells His wonderful stories of forgiveness. I would like Him to take me and show me the place where He was born, where He turned water into wine, and where He raised the little girl from the dead.

I want to sleep near to Him, off to the side of the road by a dying fire, and to have Him greet me with a smile when I wake up in the morning. I would like to bring Him a cup of cool water when He is weary and wash His feet when they are swollen from His journey; to laugh with Him and run with Him across the fields and meadows on a summer afternoon. Perhaps He would sing to me the songs of old when David was king, or the song of Solomon, and bring to life those ancient of times.

I would like to be with Him when He forgives the woman accused of adultery and reprimands the Pharisees for their ignorance. And in the temple, the House of His Father, when He cleanses it of greed. Oh, how I long to be there when glory came down and took on flesh and brought reconciliation to humankind. I would stand beneath the Cross and weep in gratitude that my elder brother and friend could love me that much to take my place in agony.

But my heart rings with the story, and though I long to be with Him, He is with me and with all who will listen and accept—and that is my story and that is my song.

I'm Gipp Forster of the Mustard Seed. I'm a street pastor.

Going Deeper

- If you could travel into the Life of Jesus Christ, what stories or places or events would you like to experience with Him firsthand?
- What would you like to tell Him as you travelled together? What would you like to know?
- Is there someone you would want to bring with you as you followed along with Him, observing His Life, learning from Him and having opportunity to talk with Him?
- Who would that person be and why bring them along?

Closing Prayer

Lord Jesus, thank You for speaking to us in parables, revealing the mysteries and blessings of Your kingdom. Open our minds and hearts to understand Your teachings and apply them to our lives. Help us to discern the truths hidden within Your parables, words of Life, and to live in accordance with your will. Grant us the faith to believe and the courage to share Your Word with others. Jesus, in Your Name we pray, amen.

2025 ADVENT DAY NINE

November 23

Scripture Reading: Isaiah 9:1-7

"Great will be His authority, and there shall be endless peace for the throne of David and His kingdom. He will establish and uphold it with justice and with righteousness from this time onward and forevermore. The zeal of the Lord of hosts will do this." Isaiah 9:7

Gipp's Ramblings Number 5, 1986

The bells rang with the beauty of celebrated adoration, and the seasons were blended to be one of worship. The farmer left his plough in the furrow, the salesman his wares on the shelves of his shop, the housewife her preparation for the holiday feast.

"Come worship the Lord," the bells sang. "Come and be one at His throne of grace!" The old gathered, as did the young! They came like the rising of the morning sun! They came walking and riding! Their eyes cast heavenward; their hands and minds relaxed from labour; their praises gathering in their hearts. It was the Lord's Day, and the bells sang of celebration. And the world once again sang this new song and paid homage to the Prince of Peace in the lands of war!

Anthems were chanted, songs of praise delivered hymns offered to the skies. If a stranger should ask, "What day is this that man leaves his labour for that of celebration?" The answer would come, "It is the Lord's Day, come with us and adore Him!"

This is what it should be, but isn't! This is reality that was traded cheaply for fantasy at the table of the moneychangers! This is subtle degradation at the expense of the Author of life! The Lord's Day comes, and it passes unnoticed by all but the few!

The free world hangs out its sign, "Business as usual!" Clouds gather, and we heed not the signs of the times, nor do we cast our eyes heavenward. The Groom shall return to collect His bride. One shall be taken, and one shall be left behind; and we are audacious in our complacency to yawn, "All is well with my soul." Hear the bells ring on Sunday morning and hear their song of, "Come let us adore Him!" To rob Him, even of this, is folly.

I'm Gipp Forster of the Mustard Seed. I'm a Street Pastor.

Going Deeper

- What does the 'Lord's Day' mean for you?
- Would it be possible for you to dedicate a day in your week to God, alone? A morning, an afternoon, an hour? Could you be intentional with this time, keeping it Holy, open and set aside for Him?
- What is one thing you could do to uphold your relationship with Creation and keep space that allows you to 'adore Him'?

Closing Prayer

Oh, Holy One, my Wonderful Counsellor, I need Your wisdom and guidance in my life today. You are sovereign over my greatest problems. Thank You for Your loving hand always on our shoulder. Lord, bring us Your peace that surpasses understanding, bring healing and restore wholeness to all that's broken in our world; Your peace to wounded souls. Thank You Jesus for being our resurrection hope, and the promise that You will make all things new. It is in Your Name that we pray, amen.

2025 ADVENT DAY TEN

November 24

Scripture Reading: Philippians 2:1-11

“Therefore, God exalted Him even more highly and gave Him the name that is above every other name, so that at the name given to Jesus every knee should bend, in heaven and earth and under the earth, and every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.” Philippians 2:9-11

Gipp's Ramblings Number 204, 1984

I have read and read through the Bible many times, and each time it is as new and as vibrant as never before.

To the carnal man, it is simply a book—a book they say contradicts itself and is dusty and boring. But when one realizes that the Bible is Spirit and written to and for the spiritual man... the spirit awakens to new life, abundant and eternal life, and the Word of God takes on a full and newer meaning.

When Jesus says, “I am the Way, the Truth and the Life”, my spirit soars, for within these words lies my freedom, and within that freedom I am born again. I am not Nicodemus to ask how that can be, for the flesh is limited and without recourse; while the Spirit is unlimited by eternity, where Death holds no victory or sting and the grave yawns with an empty mouth. This cannot be understood unless God so chooses to reveal it.

We desire it, for we counterfeit it with humanism, hoping for the reward of recognition, but it is never enough.

Spiritual eyes know the Bible to be more than a book. Spiritual ears hear the softness of the Messiah's words, “Come unto Me, ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.”

The Bible is a book of treasure. A treasure that never rusts or corrodes. It is not dusty. Only the mind is dusty that will not see with the heart. It is Spirit and can only be understood in spirit.

It is life without a grave. It is the Last Will and Testament of my Elder Brother.

I'm Gipp Forster of the Mustard Seed. I'm a street pastor.

Going Deeper

- Is the Bible to simply a book, or the Word of God, intended to help us and keep us on track, in relationship with our Creator, God? How does the Word of God speak deeply into your life?
- Gipp speaks here about a deep connection between the Bible and Jesus. In what ways have you considered this connection between Jesus and God's Word?
- Jesus describes Himself in various ways, ‘the Way, the Truth, the Life.’ Gipp even considers Jesus his elder Brother, in this rambling. How would you best describe Jesus for who He is in your life?

Closing Prayer

Lord Jesus, we give You thanks and praise. We acknowledge that You are exalted above all things, and that every knee will bow and every tongue confess that You are Lord. We submit to Your authority and Lordship, and we commit to living lives that bring glory to God the Father. We thank You for your sacrifice and for the gift of salvation. In Jesus' Name we pray, amen.

2025 ADVENT DAY ELEVEN

November 25

Scripture Reading: Isaiah 9:2, 6-7

"The people walking in darkness have seen a great light; on those living in the land of deep darkness a light has dawned." Isaiah 9:2

Gipp's Ramblings Number 239, 1984

Some people say there is little hope for the world in our destructive exodus from the morals of a once was society, they say we plunge recklessly to the awaiting gates of Armageddon, and all is lost.

But I believe the totality of loss lies within the danger of forfeiting a belief in Goodness and Promise and settling complacently into a doom's day syndrome that leaves little or no room for hope. We can bring about change if we are willing to go forward where the battle rages on the front lines, and if we are willing to lay down our comforts and traditions to find a solution for a world gone mad.

It might begin in a corner, perhaps an insignificant one, where no one notices or cares, but at least there is a beginning. I believe in God even when I can't see or hear Him. I believe in people even when all seems hopeless. I believe in you, and I pray that you believe in me. And even if there's only the two of us, that's reason to hope.

I'm Gipp Forster. I'm a Street Pastor.

Going Deeper

Is it hopeless? We are living in times of hopelessness; our streets are filled with people who are homeless. Our health care system is failing, and our political leaders seem to be pushing at a half-filled balloon, which only moves to another space and remains the same. We are like the disciples, who cry, "Lord, do you not care that we are perishing?" Are there no answers?

Are we helpless? Have you ever found yourself falling and there is no one to stop or catch you in time—all you can do is wait for the crash and the pain? We are like the man on the Jericho Road who fell among robbers who beat, stripped and robbed him. There was nothing he could do and no one to help; he was in a helpless situation. Like Peter who was drowning in a sea of darkness. He cried out, "Lord, save me!" It is a helpless situation.

Is there hopefulness? Government, political leaders, programs and religion, cannot give hope in our times of darkness and crisis. But God comes to us, in the form of humanity, "Unto us a child is born." He also comes to those who are homeless; He was born in a stable. But He comes not only to identify with us, but to bring us hope; in the chaos, He brings us peace, justice, righteousness. He is here to lift us up out of our hopelessness, our helplessness, to transform our lives into something wonderful.

This is our hope!

Closing Prayer

Father in heaven, we desire Your will to be done in our lives here on earth just as it is done in heaven. We realize that without You we are hopeless and helpless, but You are our hope in these days. May the Spirit of Jesus begin a transformation that will lift our lives to a place where we have this wonderful hope. In Jesus name.

2025 ADVENT DAY TWELVE

November 26

Scripture Reading: Matthew 16:13-17

"But what about you?" He asked. "Who do you say I am?" Simon Peter answered, "You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God." Matthew 6:15-16

Gipp's Ramblings Number 8, 1984

Sometimes I believe that many Christians today try to intellectualize the gospel of Jesus Christ into our carnal spheres of understanding.

Creating God in our own image, so to speak.

This point was brought home recently when I heard of a certain graffiti found on a wall of St. John's University. It went like this:

And Jesus said unto them: "Who do I say that I am?"

And they replied: "You are the eschatological manifestation of the grounds of our being, the kerygma in which we find the ultimate meaning of our interpersonal relationships."

And Jesus said: "What?"

This is Gipp Forster from the Mustard Seed. I'm a street pastor.

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Going Deeper

The great question of life, "Who is Jesus of Nazareth?"

If you saw graffiti on the wall outside your home that asked that question today, what would be your thoughts? How would you respond?

Take this question closer to home, if you were able to see this question on the walls of your heart and mind, what would be your heartfelt response?

To answer this life changing question, you do not need to have a theological degree or academic intellect, but a simple reply in your own words, that reflects a great truth, "You are the Christ, the Son of the Living God!"

Closing Prayer

Father God, thank You for coming to us in the person of your Son Jesus who is the image of the invisible God. May our lives reflect the revealed truth, that Jesus, is "the Christ the Son of the Living God"

2025 ADVENT DAY THIRTEEN

November 27

Scripture Reading: John 13:3-20

"Do you understand what I have done for you?" He asked them. "You call me 'Teacher' and 'Lord,' and rightly so, for that is what I am. Now that I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also should wash one another's feet. I have set you an example that you should do as I have done for you." John 13:12-15

Gipp's Ramblings Number 191, 1984

My phone rang the other day, and I didn't recognize the voice on the other end.

"Who is this?" I said.

"It's your boss," came the answer.

"My boss?" I queried. "I don't have a boss! Who is this?"

"Your boss!" he repeated.

I started to get angry. "Look, whoever you are... I'm a minister, the Senior Pastor at my church. I don't have a boss."

"Don't you?" the voice said softly.

Now I was really upset. "Who is this?" I insisted.

"I told you; it's your boss!"

I get a lot of crank calls, and I was much too busy to be playing guessing games. "Look, I've got to go," I said. "You must have the wrong person."

"No, I don't have the wrong person," the voice said. "It's you I want to speak to."

"Well, Boss," I said sarcastically, "Do you have a name?"

"Yes," came the reply, "I have a name!"

"Then what is it?" I said, exasperated.

"My name is Jesus," came the soft reply.

There was silence for a moment. Then, in a choked voice, I said, "What can I do for you, Boss?" Then I sat there shamefaced and listened to my instructions for the day.

I'm Gipp Forster of the Mustard Seed... I'm a street pastor.

Going Deeper

- Throughout scripture, God makes His Presence known in so many ways. There are times that He speaks to those who are listening for His Voice. How has God drawn near, sought your attention?
- Has an act of humility by someone, an action that you benefited from, made you sense that in a mysterious way your spirit was being moved by the Spirit of God?
- When you have realized that the Spirit of Jesus has blessed your life in a profound way, did it move you to go and bless someone else?

Closing Prayer

Thank you, Father, that Your son Jesus humbled himself in obedience as a servant, by going to the cross in an act of redemption and blessing for us. Thank You for the relationship of Life more abundantly that You've invited us into. Help us to listen closely to hear the leading of Your Spirit in our lives. In Jesus' Name, amen.

2025 ADVENT DAY FOURTEEN

November 28

Scripture Reading: Matthew 24:36-44

"Praise be to the Lord, to God our Savior, who daily bears our burdens. Our God is a God who saves; from the Sovereign Lord comes escape from death." Psalm 68:19-20

Gipp's Ramblings Number 176, 1985

Once upon a time three shadows sat down at an invisible table to discuss the fate of the world. There was death, there was life, and there was peace—each with a portfolio that man in his plight was unaware of.

Death spoke first, "LET US END IT ALL," he said, "IN ALL THESE THOUSANDS OF YEARS, THEY HAVE LEARNED NOTHING. LET ME KISS THEM TO SLEEP."

But life answered and said, "DON'T BE TOO RASH. THERE HAVE BEEN POETS IN THEIR MIDST AND ARTISTS AND MUSICIANS. MANY WHO KNEW AND KNOW THE DIFFERENCE. THEY KEEP THE WORLD ALIVE!"

Peace was quick to agree with life and added, "AND MY PEOPLE, TOO, HAVE WALKED WITH THE GENTLE. INDEED, THEY HAVE MARCHED THAT DEATH'S KISS WOULD NOT COME. LET US CONSIDER THIS FURTHER."

Suddenly, a greater shadow covered the three lesser shadows, and a mighty voice whispered within a storm, "WHO ARE YOU TO DEBATE WHAT YOU HAVE NOT CREATED? I HAVE AUTHORED EACH ONE OF YOU, AND WHAT I HAVE STARTED, I SHALL END IN THE SEASON OF MY CHOOSING. AND THOUGH THE DAY FAST APPROACHES, NONE OF YOU KNOW THE HOUR." Death departed from the table quickly to hide in the darkness from whence he had come. Life fled to the top of a mountain to contemplate what he had heard. And peace set up its camp outside the fence of a nuclear plant, mumbling about its lack of authority.

The giant shadow sat down at the empty table. He carried a large book, and after opening it, he made an entry with the tip of his finger and wrote down an hour that none but Him could see!

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Going Deeper

- How does the depiction of Death, Life, and Peace in Gipp's ramblings resonate with you. What stands out for you the most?
- Why do you think that life is not an easy straightforward path of peace?
- If God is a Spirit and gives us life and seeks our good and blessings, how can we relate with Him in our fears, chaos and life here on earth?

Closing Prayer

Lord God, as physical beings we find it difficult to relate to You as Spirit. But we are thankful that Jesus said, "He who has seen me, has seen the Father." Lord, thank You for coming to show us the way and, that trusting in You with all our heart, we know that the future is in Your hands. Thank you for the peace that comes through our letting go.
In the Name of Jesus, Saviour of the world, amen.

2025 ADVENT DAY FIFTEEN

November 29

Scripture Reading: Luke 2:21-35

"Then Simeon blessed them and said to Mary, his mother: 'This child is destined to cause the falling and rising of many in Israel, and to be a sign that will be spoken against, so that the thoughts of many hearts will be revealed. And a sword will pierce your own soul too.'"

Luke 2:34-35

Gipp's Ramblings Number 404, 1984

A little boy once stood in the doorway of a great cathedral, and he wouldn't move. The priest would try to chase him away, but in moments the little boy would be back again.

One day, an old, homeless man sat down on the steps near him. He smiled at the little boy and said, "Every day you stand here, every day you wait. Why do you do this? Whom do you wait for?"

And the little boy without a smile answered, "I'm waiting for Christmas."

"Why?" asked the old man. "Because my daddy has no work," the little boy sobbed. "And because we have so little to eat and because my wooden soldier is broken."

"But, what does that have to do with Christmas?" asked the man.

"Because last Christmas we had no food and I had no toys, but then, people came laughing and brought us a huge turkey and a whole bunch of other things. And candy, too, and a wooden soldier for me. But the food went quickly, and my wooden soldier got broken. So now I'm waiting for Christmas so that we can eat again, and my wooden soldier can be fixed. Because the people said it all came from the Christmas spirit."

The old man with tears in his eyes rose from the steps, patted the little boy on the head, and shuffled down the street. And the little boy waited for Christmas so that his family might be embraced by caring and that his wooden soldier might be fixed.

I'm Gipp Forster, and from the Mustard Seed to you... have a very Merry Christmas.

Going Deeper

- Often at the season of Christmas we find broken people, young and old, at the doors of our churches. Why is this?
- There is such expectation and wonder in the character of the child in Gipp's rambling. Who do you picture this child as, who was refused entrance?
- If someone who was broken in life was standing at the entrance of your church, and asked you what is the Spirit of Christmas, how would you answer their question?

Closing Prayer

Lord God, as physical beings we find it difficult to relate to You as Spirit. But we are thankful that Jesus said, "He who has seen me, has seen the Father." Lord, thank You for coming to show us the way and, that trusting in You with all our heart, we know that the future is in Your hands. Thank you for the peace that comes through our letting go.
In the Name of Jesus, Saviour of the world, amen.

2025 ADVENT DAY SIXTEEN

November 30

Scripture Reading: Luke 2:1-7

“So, Joseph also went up from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to Judea...while they were there, the time came for the baby to be born, ⁷ and she gave birth to her firstborn, a son. She wrapped him in cloths and placed him in a manger, because there was no guest room available for them.”

Luke 2:4,6-7

Gipp's Ramblings Number 422, 1984

Every year it's the same. People complain of the commercialism of Christmas and 'can't wait until it's over.' But, oh, what joy we forfeit in our bitter complaining.

Christ was born into commercialism as Rome sought to tax an overburdened people. Money was bartered for shelter, and inflation for the moment was the rule.

But it didn't stop the shepherds from leaving their flocks to bring their gifts. Neither should it stop us from entering the stable of meaning to behold the grace of God.

The Christmas spirit is not an accident, not brought on by brightly lit lights or gaily wrapped presents. The Christmas spirit is that of the Child, the Prince of Peace, and the money changers cannot change that.

Let us forget what others are doing and concentrate instead on what God is doing in the wonder of this Christmas season. Let us make room for Him in our hearts, and the commercialism will give way to a stable, and the gift given to mankind, the gift of a baby and the salvation of the world.

I'm Gipp Forster and I'm a street pastor. From the Mustard Seed to you, a very Merry Christmas.

Going Deeper

- Often at the season of Christmas we find broken people, young and old, at the doors of our churches. Why is this?
- There is such expectation and wonder in the character of the child in Gipp's rambling. Who do you picture this child as, who was refused entrance?
- If someone who was broken in life was standing at the entrance of your church, and asked you what is the Spirit of Christmas, how would you answer their question?

Closing Prayer

Lord God, as physical beings we find it difficult to relate to You as Spirit. But we are thankful that Jesus said, "He who has seen me, has seen the Father." Lord, thank You for coming to show us the way and, that trusting in You with all our heart, we know that the future is in Your hands. Thank you for the peace that comes through our letting go.

In the Name of Jesus, Saviour of the world, amen.

2025 ADVENT DAY SEVENTEEN

December 1

Scripture Reading: 1 Corinthians 13:1-13

“Love never fails... For now we see only a reflection as in a mirror; then we shall see face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I am fully known. And now these three remain: faith, hope and love. But the greatest of these is love.” 1 Corinthians 13:8,12-13

Gipp's Ramblings Number 40, 1986

When I was a little boy, I took my security for granted and expected to be housed and fed, protected, loved, cherished, and clothed. Love was an accepted fact, not something to be dissected or written about. Love didn't have to be understood. It was just 'there!'

But as the years began to take their toll, love suddenly had to defend itself, give a reason for its existence, prove itself before acceptance was complete. It began to take on new shadows, new masks, so to speak! Its innocence was shed like a cocoon, its child-like simplicity was abandoned for armour, and its maturity was stunted by expectations.

Often it sat at the tables of moneychangers and debated its solitude with noise. She had many identities! Some saw her as a tease and would not believe her to be anything else! Others as a distant queen to be worshipped but never touched! Still others saw her as a butterfly, flitting from leaf to leaf but never staying long in one spot.

A very few see her for what she is: a giving, loving entity without excuse; a healing wonder of blessedness without any masks, save that of truth. She stands quietly next to her crippled and counterfeit sister. She sings a sweet and untroubled song amidst the noise of demand and expectation. There is nothing cheap about her!

The only cheapness is often our own approach to her loveliness. She is selfless and blameless, a star in the hand of the Son of God. We have painted her at times, with hideous colours, but she still reaches out beyond the neon of our thoughts to heal our afflictions and draw us to her bosom of unconditional concern and give us rest. Her heart is the heart of God, and that is where she dwells.

I'm Gipp Forster of the Mustard Seed. I'm a Street Pastor.

Going Deeper

- The world speaks and sings of love as though it a packaged gift. When you first opened it, what did you discover about love?
- If you were asked to describe 3 words of what true love is, what would you say, and why?
- The love of heaven and the love of the world are separate. Take a moment to consider their qualities and defining characteristics.

Closing Prayer

We thank You, Father, for Your Love that came from heaven, and was clothed in humanity, in the person of Your Son, Jesus. Thank You that in the Life of Your Son we can learn of what Your Love on earth, as it is in heaven, looks like. Give us courage to live into Your Love, especially when the enemy of our souls seeks to distract us, even with the ease subtle compromise. In Jesus' Name, the One who rescues us into His Love, amen.

2025 ADVENT DAY EIGHTEEN

December 2

Scripture Reading: Galatians 5:22-26

"Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit. Let us not become conceited, provoking and envying each other."

Galatians 5:24-26

Gipp's Ramblings Number 171, 1984

Jesus said, "Go out into the world and preach the gospel." He also said, "By their fruits you shall know them."

I think often we get these sayings mixed up and take them out of context. I believe God wants spiritual fruit and not religious nuts.

Christianity rests not only on what man says but on what he does and who he is. Jesus said, "If you want to be great in the Kingdom of Heaven... you must be the servant of all." To be a bully is not to preach the gospel, and the fruits of a bully are distasteful to most.

Fanaticism is often mistaken for zeal, and condemnation stunts forgiveness until it becomes only a word.

If Christianity in the hands of humankind is to be believed, then there must be invisible words within a touch, whispered encouragement when things seem darkest, a belief in the goodness of the gospel that it will prevail against all odds.

To be a bearer of light and infinite patience in the deepest of valleys... is to be a bearer of the Gospel.

I'm Gipp Forster of the Mustard Seed. I'm a Street Pastor.

Going Deeper

- The Love of God is a light, like a city on a hill, and it feels like peace. Have you encountered someone with a billboard around their neck condemning the world? How has it made you feel?
- Has there been a moment in your life that someone in a gentle manner met a deep need in your life. How would you explain their presence with you, or the spirit within them?
- Consider the fruit of the Spirit and your life. Choose one of the fruits that Paul mentions in Galatians 5:22 to describe yourself by. What is the taste of this fruit as people would experience it through your life.

Closing Prayer

Oh Lord Jesus, help us to know humility and to live into loving service for one another. Open our hearts to one another, as we surrender our self-interest, for the experience of Your Presence. Thank You for coming to us, inviting us into Your Love, that the world may know we follow You, by our Love. In Jesus' Name, amen.

2025 ADVENT DAY NINETEEN

December 3

Scripture Reading: Luke 2:8-16

“An angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. ¹⁰ But the angel said to them, “Do not be afraid. I bring you good news that will cause great joy for all the people. ¹¹ Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; He is the Messiah, the Lord.” Luke 2:9-11

Gipp's Ramblings Number 405, 1984

Never does memory become so active as in the Christmas season. Memories of odours in warm kitchens of popcorn, strings of high snowbanks, and delicious apples, peppermint candy, and carols softly sung.

Yesterday's Christmas seems always to be finer than today's. There is always a comparison with that catch-all phrase, "I remember when...!"

Indeed, Christmas seems to become more commercialized with each passing season, but its softness and meaning can never be lost in our struggle to count receipts or bills. For its gentle longing is felt in the hearts of all of those who will take time to remember and to wonder at the unexplained tear that crystalizes on a hardened cheek.

I remember sleighs and warm hay streets that became ice palaces, snowmen that guarded the front lawn, and a Salvation Army band playing carols and marching from block to block. Now I am older, but I see in the eyes of my children that same wonder and enchantment as they nestle in the magic of Christmas and touch its meaning with a gentle hand.

No, I've not forgotten the Child nor the Spirit that bathes us in goodwill. For He is the centrepiece, and my gratitude to Him rests by the hearth of thanksgiving. To Him be the glory and the wonder of Christmas. To Him and for Him is the celebration, for He is the author of our memory.

I'm Gipp Forster and from the Mustard Seed to you... have a very merry Christmas!

Going Deeper

- As we get older, we have more Christmas memories to draw on. Are there a few good Christmas memories that come to mind for you following this reading?
- What aspects of the Christmas season in general resonates in your spirit; the gifts, the music or the family gatherings. Choose something and consider its deeper meaning for you?
- Is it true that children enjoy Christmas more than adults? What are the changes in life for that to happen, and how can we all experience the magic of Christmas the way it was intended to be?

Closing Prayer

Lord God, thank You for the gift of memory, and that we have this time of year to remember Your Love and birth, that our relationship with You might be restored. Spirit of God, keep our hearts and minds centred on You through this season of Advent. There are so many distractions. Help us to hear Your songs, to think on You, and to remind the world around us of the Good News, that God is with us. In Jesus' Name, amen.

2025 ADVENT DAY TWENTY

December 4

Scripture Reading: Luke 15:11-24

"When he came to his senses, he said, 'How many of my father's hired servants have food to spare, and here I am starving to death! I will set out and go back to my father and say to him: Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son; make me like one of your hired servants.' So, he got up and went to his father." Luke 15:17-20

Gipp's Ramblings Number 49, 1986

I don't think any of us realize fully the vast number of wounded roaming our streets, seeking to survive amidst neon and concrete! Those who are emotionally and mentally ill. Still others whose minds have been fried on drugs because drugs have become an accepted part of our society, and big money is to be made not only by shadowed dealers but by white collar executives who hide behind golf carts!

The streets are filled with wanderers, pilgrims in search of an impossible city! Their eyes are vacant, the voices they hear taunting, as they drift like non-entities to the shores of their own invisible nightmares. As I speak to you now, they are out there clinging to breath but never understanding why. They have no homes where needed medication might be administered on a regular basis. And if they do, they have lost direction to return there while parents and loved one's weep, waiting for their return and filled with terror each time the telephone rings.

Friendless, forlorn transients on their road to nowhere. The foxes have their dens, the birds their nests, but these—the mentally and emotionally and socially wounded—have no place to lay their weary heads. We watch our soap operas, our sports events, the news, and the animal kingdom while they search for some long-ago lost identity that has been smothered by the smoke of false dreams, chemical imbalances, allergies, or the trauma of a rushing torrent where they fell out of the boat but no one came in search of them.

They bob and float in churning waters of indifference and complacency, constantly being killed but never being allowed to die. They are out there now waiting to be found, and they cannot find their way home.

I'm Gipp Forster of the Mustard Seed... I'm a street pastor.

Going Deeper

- Have you encountered someone who was unhoused or affected by substance use disorder? What was your heart felt response to meeting them?
- Jesus was unhoused. It is written that 'The Son of Man has no place to lay his head.' (Matthew 8:20). Why do think that Jesus left his home to become a wandering messenger of the Kingdom?
- He identifies with each one of us and experienced the worst of suffering even to the point of such horrible punishment and death on the cross; yet He loved us. What steps can you take to bring the love and transformative Good News of Jesus' life into the lives of those who feel oppressed?

Closing Prayer

Lord God, thank You for the gift of memory, and that we have this time of year to remember Your Love and birth, that our relationship with You might be restored. Spirit of God, keep our hearts and minds centred on You through this season of Advent. There are so many distractions. Help us to hear Your songs, to think on You, and to remind the world around us of the Good News, that God is with us. In Jesus' Name, amen.

Acknowledgements

Gipp Forster

(April 15, 1937 – April 15, 2013) Thank You, Jesus, for the life of Gipp. Thank You for showing us more of Your heart of love through Him. Thank You for the inspiration of Your Spirit, Lord, in Gipp as he tirelessly poured out these stories of hope.

Gipp's Family

Thank you for sharing Gipp, who offered such presence of his loving care while he was here to the story of God's love expressed through compassionate service in the Mustard Seed Street Church. Gipp continues to be a foundational inspiration in our approach to serving our community.

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Canadian Baptists of Western Canada

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The Mustard Seed Street Church

"Called not to preach, but to serve." How this community embraces and cares for all, every day, continues to inspire the imagination of God's Love for the world and the Hope we have in Christ Jesus.

