

Sunday, December 24

Scripture Reading: 1 Peter 1:3-5, NRSV

The nights are long and getting longer as we go through Advent. My children sleep with abandon. I love to watch their faces and to see their arms and legs awry. Loud noises rarely wake them. They sleep all the way through the night until morning.

I suspect I'll never again sleep as my children do. I wake. I worry. Sometimes I pray, sometimes I turn over and go back to sleep. When I do pray, the truth is that I do so hoping it will help me fall asleep quickly. I don't want to be awake, alone in the dark, where there are no distractions to keep me from the reality of my personal circumstances which may be screaming out for worry.

Alone. No distractions. No where to go. The electronic media are switched off, and the phone is silent. The house is quiet. But, I am not alone. God is up all night. Could it be God is using this time to draw me close?

I'm finding it helpful to go to sleep reflecting on a Bible verse or a phrase from a sermon that urges me deeper into the mystery of God's grace in Jesus Christ. When I wake, I return to the meditation before daylight concerns leap to mind. If I can hang on to thoughts of what Christ has done and is doing, I can hold off the thoughts of all I have to be doing come morning.

Passages like the one from 1 Peter center me on praising God for the love at the heart of the universe: *Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! By his great mercy he has given us a new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, and into an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you, who are being protected by the power of God through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.*

Such a scripture assures us that all is well at the deepest levels of reality so that our worries and concerns are soothed in the peace of Christ. We can rest in God's love knowing that the sleepless hours are filled with the Christ who still gives us the satisfaction of his marvelous presence.

Prayer: Keep watch, dear Lord, with those who work, or watch, or weep this night, and give your angels charge over those who sleep. Tend the sick, Lord Christ; give rest to the weary, bless the dying, soothe the suffering, pity the afflicted, shield the joyous; and all for your love's sake. *Amen.*

Prayer from *The Book of Common Prayer* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990) p. 134.

Julie Martin



*And Mary said: "My
soul glorifies the Lord and
my spirit rejoices in God
my Savior ..."*

LUKE 1:46-47. NIV