

Prayer

Dear Father,

Here I am at the beginning of another year, 2026 already. I look back with both disappointment and deep gratitude – disappointed that I did not serve you better or love you more, grateful that I could serve you at all and love you a little.

In your great mercy, increase my love for Jesus and your Word and a willingness to love my neighbour. Refresh me again with your Word and with your presence as I stand at the portal of the opening year, with the assurance that your Word will never, never pass away.

Song: by J Johnson, E Cash, B Fielding, J Ingram, B Johnson

1. I love You, Lord, oh Your mercy never failed me
And all my days, I've been held in Your hands
From the moment that I wake up until I lay my head
Oh, I will sing of the goodness of God

*All my life You have been faithful, all my life You have been so, so good
With every breath that I am able oh, I will sing of the goodness of God*

2. I love Your voice, You have led me through the fire
In darkest night You are close like no other
I've known You as a Father, I've known You as a Friend
Oh, I have lived in the goodness of God

Refrain

Your goodness is running after, it's running after me
Your goodness is running after, it's running after me
With my life laid down, I'm surrendered now
I give You everything (repeat)
'Cause Your goodness is running, it keeps running after me

Refrain

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Scripture

- John 1:1-14

Message: Confidence based on Truth

What beautiful and reassuring words are these from John's gospel. Here is the transformed 'son of thunder', who once asked for the un-giveable, and wanted fire and brimstone to fall on those who rejected Jesus. Here is a different man who writes with such confidence and reverence for the Word, who "was in the beginning with God".

In the context of the drama of our contemporary life, and the uncertainty of our times which seems to be increasing on a daily basis, these timeless words

offer a striking contrast. We are surrounded by many things, the unknown future, the potential impact of AI, the increasing possibility of being scammed, the unrelenting bad news on TV, the impact of social media. Fear and violence seem to be on the rise, the most recent being “ideologically driven”, we have been told.

And then we hear John continue: “To all who did receive him [IE Christ], who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God.”

And again: “[He] became flesh and dwelt among us, full of grace and truth.”

So here we are at the start of a new year with these contrasting paradigms, or perhaps we could say contrasting ideologies.

The way you think about the events of the recent past, the current state of affairs, and what might lie ahead, and the effect that that thinking has on you, is heavily influenced by your personal belief system and who you are listening to. Who are you listening to? The media commentary does not encourage much confidence.

One of CS Lewis’s better known quotes is: “I believe in Christianity [in the same way] I believe that the Sun has risen, not only because I see it, but because by it I see everything else.”¹ The Bible, the Christian Scriptures, introduces a completely different perspective of the universe and of world events. For those who embrace what the Bible has to say, the impact of what is happening personally, locally, nationally and world wide will be quite different to those who ignore or reject its message.

How is this so? For most reading or hearing this message, the answer is well known, but still worth repeating.

By the light of the sun, we don’t see only the sun. We see everything else. The Word of God, both the living and the written, gives a light which when looked at closely shines bright and clear, but perhaps more significantly it provides a light that enables the believer to view and interpret the circumstances of life in a way that is quite different to the contemporary chatter.

We could start with many facts the Bible tells us, but arguably the most significant is that God in the person of Jesus Christ has overcome the common enemy of humanity: death. Jesus came, full of grace and truth, and he died. He was dead for days. Then he came back to life again. This is the guarantee that all he said and promised is trustworthy.

The Christian understands that Jesus is both the embodiment and source of truth and grace. The Christian has the comfort of knowing God as a caring father. The Christian can look at circumstances and say with Isaiah “I will wait for the Lord who is hiding his face. I will put my trust in him.”² Habakkuk similarly, when astonished and perplexed at the imminent destruction of his nation, of Jerusalem and of the Temple by violent people, could say: “I will stand at my watch. I will look to see what he will say to me.”³

¹ *Is Theology Poetry*, by CS Lewis

² Isaiah 8:17

³ Hab 2:1

We can continue with what the Bible has to say about the supremacy of this same Jesus.⁴ That he is Lord, ruling and reigning now at the right hand of the majesty in heaven, that every knee will bow before him, and that righteousness will prevail forever⁵. The long anticipated return of Christ, the final judgment and execution of justice, and the coming Kingdom with its eternal benefits. That all will be well.

And the present comfort of the presence of God through the agency of the Holy Spirit, the Scriptures and the fellowship of believers.

All these are precious possessions which strengthen us at the present time. This is the other voice that we are able to hear, that our first song speaks about. These things help us to have confidence and peace, based on truth.

And we thank God for granting us citizenship in his kingdom, adopting us into his family, giving depth, meaning and hope in life.

Dear Christian, at the beginning of 2026 we see the world is full of trouble, as it always has been. Modern technology ensures we are more aware of it and we don't ignore it. Surely Jesus' words are just so relevant: "Each day has enough trouble of its own"⁶. The Christian is able to look at these troubles and in the midst of fear and anxiety say "I trust in you, oh Lord; I say 'You are my God'".⁷

Amen.

Prayer for suffering Christians in Bangladesh (*from Barnabas Prayer 1/1/26*)

As we begin a new year, praise our Lord that some things never change, such as His love, mercy and faithfulness. Be grateful also that God does bring about change through His people and that His kingdom is advancing.

Pray that Barnabas Aid and our many project partners will know His guidance and discernment throughout 2026 in supporting suffering Christians worldwide and extending the reach of His grace.

Pray that every project and initiative will honour Him, build His Church and enable His kingdom to grow.

(Lamentations 3:22-23; Mark 4:26-29)

Song: *by B W Hastings, M Brandon Lake, D Bowe*

1. All my words fall short, I got nothing new
How could I express all my gratitude?
2. I could sing these songs as I often do
But every song must end and You never do.

⁴ Colossians 1:15ff

⁵ Isaiah 51:8

⁶ Matthew 6:34

⁷ Psalm 31:14

Confidence based on Truth

*So I throw up my hands and praise You again and again
'Cause all that I have is a hallelujah, hallelujah
And I know it's not much but I've nothing else fit for a King
Except for a heart singing hallelujah, Hallelujah*

3. I've got one response, I've got just one move
With my arm stretched wide I will worship You

Chorus

So come on, my soul, Oh, don't you get shy on me
Lift up your song 'cause you've got a lion inside of those lungs
Get up and praise the Lord *(repeat)*

Chorus

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Benediction:

Now may the God of peace, who by the blood of the eternal covenant brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, the great shepherd of the sheep, equip you with everything good so that you may do his will, working in you that which is pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory forever and ever.

Amen.

This service was prepared by Warren Mack for HopeNet SA