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Dear Sisters and Brothers in Christ

Last Saturday I was glad to be able to celebrate the birthday of a good friend at Scargill House in the Dales, along with many other friends. We had a great time enjoying the food, the walks, the fun, and the companionship but, above all, it was a time to give thanks for all that had been and to look forward to all that is yet to come. It was a time of remembering – very appropriate for this time of year when today, on All Souls Day, we remember those we have loved and lost and when in a few days’ time, on Remembrance Sunday, we will remember and give thanks for all those who have given their lives in service of their country.

So this time of year is a good time **to pause and to take stock.** I invite you to take a few moments and **look back** over the past year. What do you want to give thanks for? What has brought you life? What has saddened you or drained you? And where has God been in it all? Can you talk to the Lord about your feelings about the past year and all that it has held?

*In the* wilderness*, too, you saw him: how the Lord carried you, as a father carries his child, all along the road you travelled on the way to this place… your God, who has gone in front of you on the journey, by night in the fire to light your path, by day in the cloud.’ Deuteronomy 1.31-32*

As Christmas begins to loom on the horizon and we are excited by the prospect of celebrating a ‘non-lockdown’ Christmas with the family and friends we couldn’t see last year, we are reminded of Immanuel, God with us. Because of the birth of Jesus 2000 years ago in Bethlehem, because of His promise that He will come again, we can **look forward** to 2022 and beyond with hope. We don’t know what the future holds, but we do know the One who holds our future. I wonder what your hopes and dreams are for the future; I wonder what your fears are. Whatever they are, talk to the Lord – invite him to shape your hopes and dreams, ask him to walk beside you in your fears.

Jesus said, ‘*All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me…. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.” Mathew 28.18,20*

And what about today? It’s only in this moment and in this place that we can encounter Jesus, the One who gives us life. It’s not yesterday, it’s not tomorrow, it’s not somewhere else, it’s not when our circumstances are different. **Today** Jesus invites us to ‘**choose life’**, today Jesus says to us, ‘*I have come that [you might] have life, and have it to the full.’* *John 10.10*. What might that mean for you? Perhaps it sounds exciting, or daunting, or impossible; however, it sounds, talk to Jesus about it. You might be surprised at what you hear!

*I was regretting the past
And fearing the future.
Suddenly my Lord was speaking:

“My name is I Am.” He paused.
I waited. He continued,
When you live in the past
With its mistakes and regrets,
It is hard. I am not there,
My name is not I WAS”.

When you live in the future
With its problems and fears,
It is hard. I am not there.
My name is not I WILL BE.

When you live in this moment,
It is not hard. I am here.
My name is I AM.*

*(Anonymous)*

The Lord Jesus is with us now, and in every moment. Talk to him, ask him for what you need on your journey, and let him fill you with his abundant life.

With my love in Christ and my prayers

Alison