



ISAIAH 64:1-9

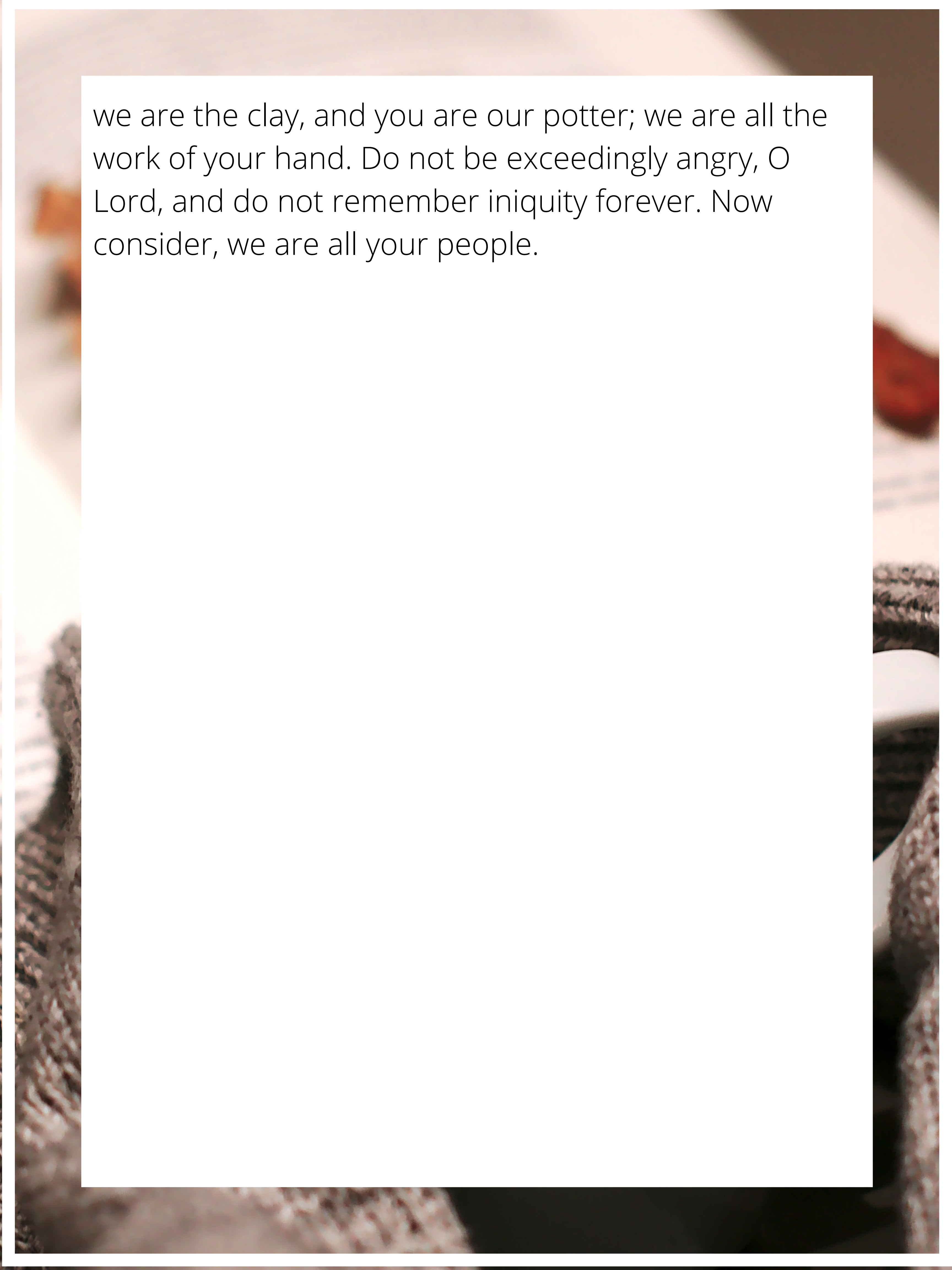
**B R E A K
O P E N**

REV. IN KEE KIM

Scripture Passage

Isaiah 64:1-9

O that you would tear open the heavens and come down, so that the mountains would quake at your presence— as when fire kindles brushwood and the fire causes water to boil—to make your name known to your adversaries, so that the nations might tremble at your presence! When you did awesome deeds that we did not expect, you came down, the mountains quaked at your presence. From ages past no one has heard, no ear has perceived, no eye has seen any God besides you, who works for those who wait for him. You meet those who gladly do right, those who remember you in your ways. But you were angry, and we sinned; because you hid yourself we transgressed. We have all become like one who is unclean, and all our righteous deeds are like a filthy cloth. We all fade like a leaf, and our iniquities, like the wind, take us away. There is no one who calls on your name, or attempts to take hold of you; for you have hidden your face from us, and have delivered us into the hand of our iniquity. Yet, O Lord, you are our Father;



we are the clay, and you are our potter; we are all the work of your hand. Do not be exceedingly angry, O Lord, and do not remember iniquity forever. Now consider, we are all your people.

Sermon

Break Open

Isaiah prayed like this: ***“O that you would tear open the heavens and come down.” (Isaiah 64:1)***. Break Open the Heavens and Come Down! Tear open the Heavens; a powerful image isn't it? God, tear open, break open the heaven and please come down. That was Isaiah's prayer, and that is also our prayer.

Today is the first Sunday of Advent. We are celebrating the coming of the Lord. We ask God to break open the heavens and come down and dwell among us. That's what we are praying for and hoping for. Isaiah's prayer had this deep yearning and desire to open the new world. It was the prayer to open a new life. That is our hope too. I hope that God opens up our world, a new world, and opens up our life.

Do you remember the baptism of Jesus when we studied the gospel of Mark? This is what Mark said, ***“And just as he was coming up out of the water, he saw the heavens torn apart and the Spirit descending like a dove on him.” (Mark 1:10)***. The

heavens opened, were torn apart, and the Spirit came down. The same imagery. The heavens open and God comes down. I think Mark had the same vision when he wrote this. He saw the new age and the new world coming through Jesus Christ. He saw the powerful impact of the coming of Jesus. Jesus opened a new life, a new world, a new humanity for all of us.

There was a reason why Isaiah prayed this prayer. It was because he was desperate. This was when the Israelites came back from Babylonian captivity. They were freed from that captivity. All the elites, the old leaders, were taken into captivity and finally they were able to come back to Jerusalem and they were excited and they had a lot of dreams of building a new country, a new temple, and restoring a new worship. They were excited when they came back but the reality was different from the dream they had. While they were in captivity, there were new rulers, new leaders, and there was tremendous conflict and tension between the old leaders who were taken into captivity and the new leaders who were running Jerusalem.

And also people became corrupt and selfish. When you're oppressed, when you lose your soul, people

become like that. They become so selfish and greedy. When you are very greedy and selfish, that's when you lose your soul. But when your soul is strong, you don't become so greedy and selfish. They were so selfish, corrupt, and greedy because they lost their soul because of this oppression by the superpowers around them. They didn't take care of the weak and the vulnerable, they didn't care about the poor around them. They were so obsessed with their own family and themselves. Isaiah saw this division, conflict, tension.

There was no unity. Even if they had unity, it was hard to restore the country that was completely destroyed.

But when they were so divided, it was almost impossible to rebuild the country. That's why Isaiah prayed, 'only you can do it God, break open the heavens and come down. We cannot do it with our own wisdom and strength.'

He saw devastation in Jerusalem. This is what he said, ***"Your holy cities have become a wilderness, Zion has become a wilderness, Jerusalem a desolation."***

(Isaiah 64:10). Isaiah saw this devastation and saw that it was humanly impossible to restore Jerusalem. And then Isaiah wondered, 'Is God still angry with us? Is that why there is division and conflict? Is that why there is

no unity? Is God still angry with us?'. Because they believed that they were taken into captivity because they worshiped idols and God was angry with them. And now they came back, but Isaiah saw this devastation in Jerusalem and thought 'Is God still angry?'. So Isaiah said, ***"Do not be exceedingly angry, O Lord, and do not remember iniquity forever. Now consider, we are all your people. (Isaiah 64:9).***

As Isaiah saw division, we also live in a divided world. Through the US election, we saw how deeply divided our neighbor was. People wondered whether the newly elected president, Joe Biden, could do anything to unite these divided people together. They are watching to see how he will deal with this deep division. But it is not only the United States that is divided.

Today is the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People. It was decided by the UN in 1977. Antonio Guterres, the UN Secretary-General said, "On this International Day of Solidarity, let us reaffirm our commitment to upholding the rights of the Palestinian people." (United Nations Secretary-General Antonio Guterres)

The tension and conflict continues between Palestine and Israel. Many powerless Palestinians suffer by losing their homes and being displaced. We see, also, much division in the world. The division between the haves and the have-nots. The division between the powerful Northern hemisphere and the poor and powerless Southern hemisphere. Korea is still divided. We see racial division among us and around us.

Our theme this year is "Becoming Together." That is our theme because we saw this kind of division in the world. Becoming Together: That is our prayer. It is our prayer because we can't do it alone. Only God can do it. We pray that God breaks open the heavens and comes down and unites us.

What can we do? Only God can unite us, but what can we do? First, we need to repent. We need to seriously repent. Isaiah prayed like this, ***"We have all become like one who is unclean, and all our righteous deeds are like a filthy cloth. We all fade like a leaf, and our iniquities, like the wind, take us away."* (Isaiah 64:6).** We human beings were proud. We were proud. We have become so proud. We mistakenly thought that the world we created was invincible. It will be with us

forever, always. We thought no one could disturb the order and abundance we created. But small viruses that are not even visible, that we cannot even see, changed our life totally upside-down. We never expected that this small virus could change our lifestyle completely. I don't know if we can ever go back to our old lifestyle. We have built our own tower and thought that it would protect us and sustain us. We were busy filling ourselves with greed and selfishness. Slowly and little by little, our souls become decayed, started dying. We are losing our soul and becoming so materialistic and greedy. We didn't see brothers and sisters who were suffering around us. With small righteousness we built for ourselves, we condemned and judged brothers and sisters and hurt them. Instead of trusting God in difficult situations, we were trapped by fear. We didn't have faith. We need to repent. We need to see what we are doing. This pandemic awakened us and we better see ourselves and what we are doing.

There is another thing Isaiah saw, and this is what he prayed, ***"We are the clay, and you are our potter; we are all the work of your hand."*** (Isaiah 64:8). Not only do we repent, we need to leave ourselves in God's hands. We are the clay and God is the potter. When we

leave ourselves in God, God will mould us and God will shape us. In many ways, we are truly like the clay. We are influenced all the time. We are influenced by our circumstances. And these circumstances shaped us and mould us. We are like clay shaped by these circumstances. Our history, our painful memories, our hurt, our thoughts, and our feelings; they all shape us. We are like the clay that is easily shaped and moulded.

Now, we should let God shape us and mould us. Instead of letting our circumstances shape us, we should let God shape us and mold us. To do that, we need to leave ourselves in God's hands and invite God within us. Then God will mould us. God will shape within us a new person.

St. Paul also saw us as the clay. But he saw something else. He saw God's treasure in the clay. This is what he said, ***"But we have this treasure in clay jars, so that it may be made clear that this extraordinary power belongs to God and does not come from us."*** (2 Corinthians 4:7) And he continues, ***"We are afflicted in every way, but not crushed; perplexed, but not driven to despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed; always carrying in***

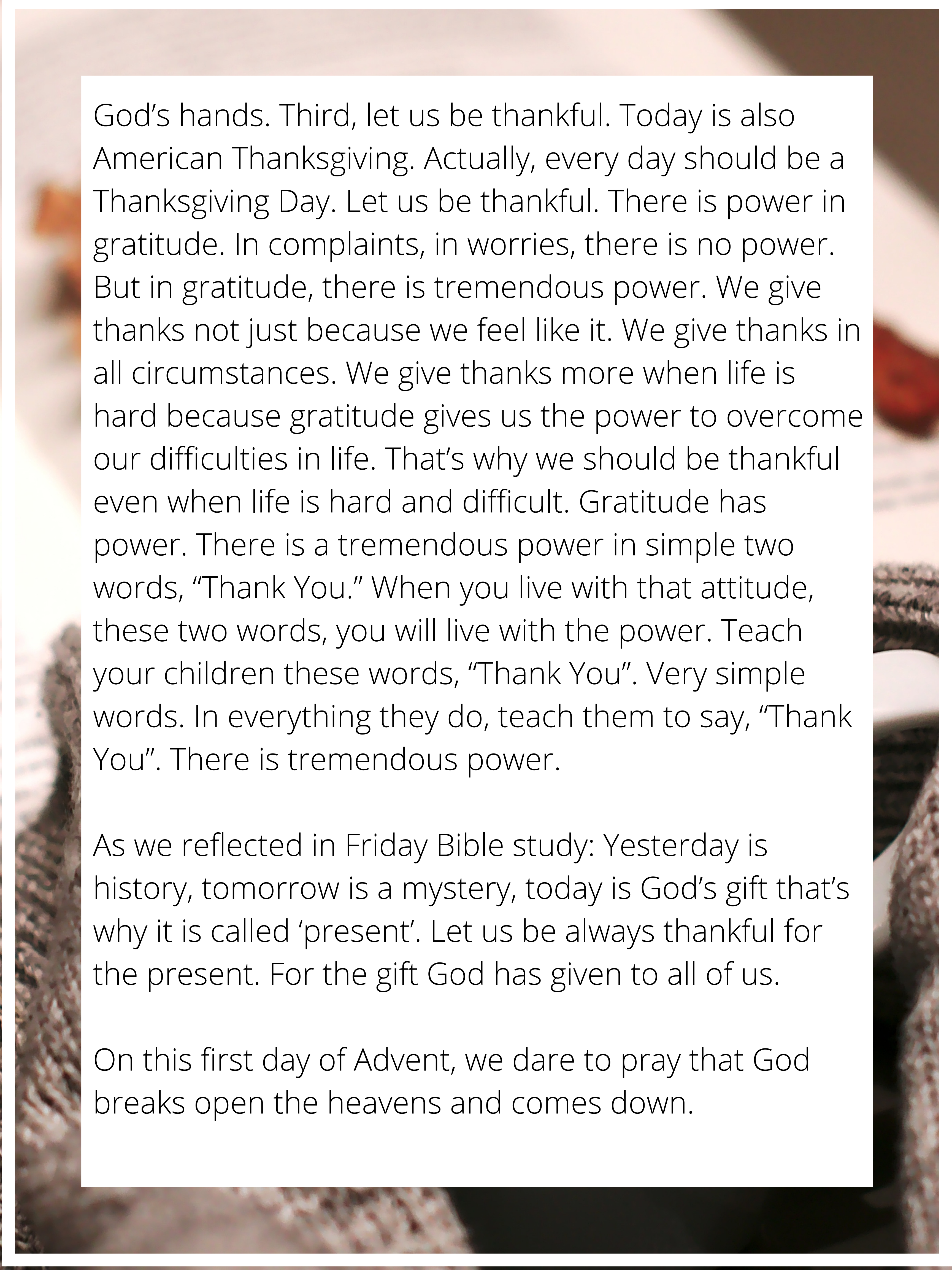
the body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be made visible in our bodies.” (2 Corinthians 4:8-10). A powerful statement.

Let us remember that the extraordinary power belongs to God; it does not come from us. The new world and the new life; God will make it. We will not be able to make it with our own power and wisdom. That is what this pandemic taught us.

Our life is so flimsy that it can be here today but disappear tomorrow. It's like a fog that is there in the morning and disappears and vanishes in the afternoon. What we have created will not stand forever. Our life stands because God sustains it. Believe that. Our life stands because God sustains it. This invisible virus could destroy us, but this invisible God can sustain us.

The new life should be the life God gives us. It is the life that God shapes and moulds. Let us leave our lives in the hands of the potter. God is the greatest artist. When you live your life in God's hands, He will make the most beautiful art out of your life.

First, we should repent. Second, we should live life in



God's hands. Third, let us be thankful. Today is also American Thanksgiving. Actually, every day should be a Thanksgiving Day. Let us be thankful. There is power in gratitude. In complaints, in worries, there is no power. But in gratitude, there is tremendous power. We give thanks not just because we feel like it. We give thanks in all circumstances. We give thanks more when life is hard because gratitude gives us the power to overcome our difficulties in life. That's why we should be thankful even when life is hard and difficult. Gratitude has power. There is a tremendous power in simple two words, "Thank You." When you live with that attitude, these two words, you will live with the power. Teach your children these words, "Thank You". Very simple words. In everything they do, teach them to say, "Thank You". There is tremendous power.

As we reflected in Friday Bible study: Yesterday is history, tomorrow is a mystery, today is God's gift that's why it is called 'present'. Let us be always thankful for the present. For the gift God has given to all of us.

On this first day of Advent, we dare to pray that God breaks open the heavens and comes down.