

ADVENT DEVOTIONALS

WEEK 2 — SEEK PEACE!

The Second Sunday of Advent: Peace

The prophet Micah, a contemporary of Isaiah, says
“...and he will be their peace”

But you, Bethlehem Ephrathah,
Though you are small among the clans of Judah,
Out of you will come for me
One who will become the ruler over Israel,
Whose origins are from of old,
From days of eternity.
He will stand and shepherd his flock
In the strength of the LORD,
In the majesty of the name of the LORD his God.
And they will live securely, for then his greatness
Will reach the ends of the earth
And he will be their Peace...

Micah 5:2, 4, 5a

Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid.
John 14:27

The journey from Galilee to Bethlehem takes several days on foot. There is no indication that Joseph had a donkey for Mary to ride upon. They arrive to find that there was “...no room for them in the inn.” Many have speculated that the inn keeper took pity upon them and found them a dry sheltered place where the animals were kept. We glean this from the reference to the manger. What we know is the baby Jesus is born, angels proclaim the news to some shepherds who had the night shift and, being inexperienced in angelic visitations, decide to come and see for themselves. It seems so extravagant for angels to come to shepherds and so absurd that the parents take refuge in a barn. He is tucked away where only a cadre of irresponsible workmen (who leave their sheep) seek him out. Can you see him? Come close. Mary smiles and moves back the cloth from his face; behold, “He is Christ, the Lord!” They look upon him and leave rejoicing. Jesus comes to us, not as a baby but as the Savior. Will you make room?

Now may “The peace of the Lord be with you.”

So Joseph also went up from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to Judea, to Bethlehem the town of David, because he belonged to the house and line of David. He went there to register with Mary, who was pledged to be married to him and was expecting a child. While they were there, the time came for the baby to be born . . .” Luke 2:4–6

Sign post ahead! Week 2, Monday

Have you ever been given a sign from God? Some say this kind of sign is an act or event used to convey certain information. Some personalize the sign as an omen or spiritual direction concerning a decision they must make. The word of the prophet is, “the Lord himself will give you a sign... a virgin will be with child... and will call him Immanuel. (Isaiah 7:14).” As it turns out, a baby boy will be born, inconveniently and crudely, to a simple couple while away from home.

Look what is set in motion! The prophet’s sign is that the mother is a virgin and the shepherds’ sign can be used as information to find the baby. The word from the angel is to go and see, “This will be a sign to you: You will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger.”

Has God promised you a sign? Does it seem outrageous? Listen as the prophet speaks:

“For the revelation awaits an appointed time; it speaks of the end and will not prove false. Though it linger, wait for it; it will certainly come and will not delay.” (Habakkuk 2:3)

You know the message God sent to the people of Israel, telling the good news of peace through Jesus Christ, who is Lord of all. (Apostle Peter, Acts 10:36)

Depart from evil, and do good; seek peace, and pursue it. (Psalm 34:14)

Back to Bethlehem. Week 2, Tuesday

So Joseph also went up from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to Judea, to Bethlehem the town of David, because he belonged to the house and line of David. He went there to register with Mary, who was pledged to be married to him and was expecting a child. While they were there, the time came for the baby to be born, and she gave birth to her firstborn, a son. She wrapped him in cloths and placed him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn. (Luke 2)

Joseph and Mary went to Bethlehem. We need to remember how this unfolded. God spoke to Mary and then Joseph. They listened, accepted the facts, and trusted God. They placed themselves in the hands of God who speaks and acts—the Living God...and got peace!

Our perspective is often narrow, earth based—limited. The path laid out for us is often difficult, and uncertain. We can choose to invite God into the events our lives or by inaction or apathy, allow things to go along as before. The way before us is difficult but the offer of companionship with the Maker of Heaven and earth will lead us to Peace.

Now may the Lord of peace himself give you peace at all times and in every way.

The Lord be with all of you.

(2 Thessalonians 3:16)

Walk in Peace! Week 2, Wednesday

God frequently leads us into impossible situations. We are confronted with problems so big that we are shaken from our routine. In our trouble, we ask God for help. We ask for wisdom and healing, but most of all that the Lord will be with us:

Linger with me a while, O God, and

Heal my heart and strengthen my knees.

There is no other who cares for me like you!

Comfort me in this time of trouble!

Joseph and Mary simply said, “Yes,” to the call of God upon their lives. They did not understand the cosmic forces at work. It probably would have freaked them out! They simply responded in trust to God’s call. They walked the road open to them and trusted that God had gone before them.

Those who become Christ followers learn to listen to God’s voice and walk in peace. We become ambassadors for peace here, now!

Listen to what the prophet says about what God will do for those who respond with an open heart.

People with their minds set on you,

you keep **completely whole****

Steady on their feet,

because they keep at it and don’t quit.

Depend on God and keep at it because

in the Lord God you have a sure thing.

(Isaiah 26:3-4, The Message)

**** in perfect peace NIV**

Peace be with you! Week 2, Thursday

Have you ever tried to read between the lines of a biblical narrative? We read that Joseph takes Mary with him to Bethlehem. Many assume God tells Joseph to take Mary. This is not indicated in the text. Joseph is kept from putting Mary away quietly by an angel's intervention in a dream. At that point, he takes Mary into his home and, when he journeys to Bethlehem, he takes this nine month pregnant virgin with him! What is he thinking? It is entirely possible that rumor and innuendo concerning her pregnancy has swept through their small community; so much so that Joseph is concerned for her welfare if she stays alone. Sometimes, seemingly isolated decisions can be divinely ordained. When asked about the birth, Herod's scholars cite scripture:

But you Bethlehem Ephratha,
 Though you are small
 among the clans of Judah,
 Out of you will come for me
 One who will become the ruler over Israel,
 Whose origins are from old,
 From days of eternity.
 He will stand and shepherd his flock
 In the strength of the LORD,
 In the majesty of the name of the LORD...
 ...and he will be their Peace...
 (Micah 5:2-5 NIV)

I will give you Peace! Week 2, Friday

"Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace to men on whom his favor rests." (Luke 2:14)

Jesus came to Bethlehem; today Jesus comes to us with an invitation and a promise. The invitation is to "Come to me all you who are weary and heavy laden, and I will give you rest." Jesus gives life and peace to those who accept it. We do not deserve nor did we earn it, but life has come to us!

It is amazing because the only thing that has happened is that we see now from God's perspective—we agree with God's word to us, and anticipate the impossible from God.

The promise is this; those who respond to the call of Jesus become Christ followers. As Christ followers we hang together a lot, study the scripture, learn to pray and as we use music to draw closer to Him in praise and worship, we become more and more sensitive to his voice. We listen for his voice every day. Jesus renews our heart and refreshes our spirit like no other!

May God himself, the God of peace, sanctify you through and through. May your whole spirit, soul and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. (1 Thessalonians 5:23)

Jesus, may your favor rest upon us as we seek to involve you in every aspect of our daily lives!