

Monday December 26 ~ Genesis 3:7-15, 17-19

The story of Christmas begins long before Mary and Joseph arrive in Bethlehem. It begins in the garden of Eden where the man and the woman discover they are naked and are punished for their disobedience. The Christmas story is the story humanity's need for salvation and God's willingness to provide it through Jesus Christ.

- Spend time in quiet reflection and confession this week. Are you aware of any separation between God and you? In prayer, acknowledge your sin and your need for God's grace.
- Prayer: *Holy God, I confess my sin and my need for salvation. Please forgive me. Fill me with awareness of your grace. Amen.*

Tuesday December 27 ~ Micah 5:2-5a

The New Testament is very insistent that the story of Jesus is part of God's larger story. Matthew and Luke, the two Gospel writers who describe Jesus' birth, insist that the Christmas story fulfills promises made through Old Testament prophets, promises like the one found in Micah 5: "from you [Bethlehem] shall come forth . . . one who is to rule in Israel."

- The Christmas story is evidence that God keeps promises. The Christmas story also makes promises: that God is with us and that God saves us. Which of these promises is most important to you this year?
- Prayer: *Faithful God, thank you for making and keeping promises. I'm depending on the promise of salvation. Amen.*

Wednesday December 28 ~ Luke 2:1-7

Luke provides a detailed account of Jesus' life, locating his birth in both time and place. He contrasts the power and authority of the Roman Emperor Augustus with the humility of a baby born in a manger. The Christmas story reminds us that the power of God works in unexpected ways. The story of Jesus' birth teaches us to look for signs of God's presence in unexpected places—like a manger in Bethlehem.

- Where do you look for signs of God in your life? Have you ever experienced God in unexpected *places*? Have you ever experienced God in unexpected *ways*?
- Prayer: *God of miracles, sometime I miss your presence and power. Help me find you in unexpected places. Amen.*

Thursday December 29 ~ Luke 2:8-20

According to Luke, the first announcement of Jesus' birth was not made in a palace or royal court, but in a field where night-shift shepherds were keeping their sheep. This says something very important about God, about the kind of people Jesus came to call and to save. The angel says to the lowly shepherds: "to you is born . . . a Savior."

- The message of salvation is not just for the high and mighty it is also for the least, the last, and the lost. Read Luke 2:10-11 again and hear the angel speaking . . . "to you!"
- Prayer: *God of Christmas, thank you for sending Jesus so that I can experience your gift of salvation. Amen.*

Friday December 30 ~ John 1:1-5

John's Gospel does not include a narrative of Jesus' birth, but it does tell us what happened at Christmas. John tells us that when Jesus was born, light began to shine in a world of darkness. He emphasizes that the light of Christ is more powerful than the darkness the world.

- Many people experience darkness, even in the most festive times of year. The darkness of sin and death seems permanent and powerful. Have you let the light of Christmas shine in your darkness? Have you shone the light of Christmas in someone else's darkness?
- Prayer: *God of light, the darkness is frightening and overwhelming. Send your light into my life today. Amen.*

Saturday December 31 ~ John 1:6-14

John 1:14 is a very important verse: "And the Word became flesh and lived among us, and we have seen his glory, the glory as of a father's only son, full of grace and truth." With these words John summarizes the Gospel message: God has come and taken human form in the person of Jesus. Later in John's Gospel, we discover why God would do something as amazing as this, "For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life." (John 3:16)

- Receive the gift of grace and truth today. Give thanks to God.
- Prayer: *God of incarnation, I love you, and welcome you into my life. I want you to live in my heart, today and always. Amen.*