

Daily Reflection on Scripture Week of December 25 The Christmas Message



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Sunday, December 25, 2016

Matthew 2:1-2 (CEB) *After Jesus was born in Bethlehem in the territory of Judea during the rule of King Herod, magi came from the east to Jerusalem. They asked, “Where is the newborn king of the Jews? We’ve seen his star in the east, and we’ve come to honor him.”*

Reflection: Today, people around the world sing “*Joy to the World, the Lord is come! Let earth receive her king; let every heart prepare him room and heaven and nature sing...*” What does it mean in your everyday life that “Jesus was born?” How does the weaving together of the Christmas story and your story make your heart sing?

Sacred Pause: Joy to the world the Lord is come. As you prepare room in your heart and home for the birth of Christ may your heart sing with joy!

Monday, December 26, 2016

Matthew 2:3-6 (CEB) *When King Herod heard this, he was troubled, and everyone in Jerusalem was troubled with him. He gathered all the chief priests and the legal experts and asked them where the Christ was to be born. They said, “In Bethlehem of Judea, for this is what the prophet wrote: You, Bethlehem, land of Judah, by no means are you least among the rulers of Judah, because from you will come one who governs, who will shepherd my people Israel.”*

Reflection: The Gospel writer Matthew tells us that King Herod was troubled by the news of the birth of Jesus. What was it about this news we call *good* that was so troubling to Herod and those around him? Are there instances in your own life where you have been troubled by how the presence of Christ might change some of the ways you are currently living? How does acknowledgement of Christ’s presence in your life lead you to making wise choices?

Sacred Pause: Is there anything troubling you today? Remember Jesus was born into a very troubled world. His other name is Emmanuel – God is with you.

Tuesday, December 27, 2016

Matthew 2:7-8 (CEB) *Then Herod secretly called for the magi and found out from them the time when the star had first appeared. He sent them to Bethlehem, saying, “Go and search carefully for the child. When you’ve found him, report to me so that I too may go and honor him.”*

Reflection: Herod heard that a baby had been born to be a powerful king, which caused him to feel insecure; that his own power, prestige and place in the world was being threatened. Rather than seeing Herod as an evil man, can you put yourself in his place and sense how insecure he must have felt? Can you recall a time when you thought your own power or prestige was somehow being threatened by another person? How does your

need for power and prestige influence your choices and actions? How might your life and the world be different/better if each one of us made the choice to be guided by Christ's light rather than our insecurities and desires for power and prestige?

Sacred Pause: Remember that Jesus' power came through humility and acts of service. The same is true for us as well. How might you humbly serve today?

Wednesday, December 28, 2016

Matthew 2:9 (CEB) *When they heard the king, they went; and look, the star they had seen in the east went ahead of them until it stood over the place where the child was.*

Reflection: Long ago, before the invention of that GPS navigation systems that we have on our smart phones and in our vehicles today, travelers used the stars to find their way to their destinations. What guides do you use to find your way in your everyday life? Tonight, before you go to bed, if you can, step outside and look up into the sky. Look to see if there are any stars. Take a few moments to remember the magi who 2,000 years ago followed a star to the very presence of God revealed in human form as a vulnerable, helpless baby. Offer your gratitude to God that every day Christ's light is with you to guide you.

Sacred Pause: Star light, star bright, the first star I see tonight. May the stars remind you of God's constant guidance to unwavering hope and new life.

Thursday, December 29, 2016

Matthew 2:10 (CEB) *When they saw the star, they were filled with joy.*

Reflection: How often do you experience your life being filled to overflowing with joy? Make a list of the things that have filled you with joy during this Christmas season. Is there one moment of joy that stands out for you that you could carry in your heart as a touchstone to return to when life is difficult? How might you seek joy in your everyday life in this New Year?

Sacred Pause: Think of the all the things that brought you joy this past year. Write 5-7 of them down and carry them with you to remind you of God's love.

Friday, December 30, 2016

Matthew 2:11 (CEB) *They entered the house and saw the child with Mary his mother. Falling to their knees, they honored him. Then they opened their treasure chests and presented him with gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh.*

Reflection: When was the last time, if ever, that the presence of Christ in your life has caused you to fall to your knees (either literally or figuratively in your heart)? Spend some time today pondering the gift of Christ in your life and what it means to you. What gifts do you have to offer Christ at this moment?

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Saturday, December 31, 2016

Matthew 2:12 (CEB) *Because they were warned in a dream not to return to Herod, they went back to their own country by another route.*

Reflection: Throughout the Bible, there are stories of God speaking to people through their dreams. Have you ever experienced God coming to you in a dream? If so, what did you hear? What, if any, guidance did you receive? How did you respond to the divine guidance you were given? If not in your dreams, in what ways do you sense God speaking to you?

Sacred Pause: On this last day of 2016 name one way you have been changed the most this year. Are you more

compassionate, forgiving, serving or wise?

Four Things to Practice in the New Year

1. Live in the moment.

Remember that in every moment God is with you. Even in the kitchen or stuck in traffic during a commute, never forget that God's unconditional love is always with you.

2. Be kind and gentle with yourself.

Remember that Jesus said to love yourself. That means forgiving yourself when you make mistakes, or say something that you really didn't mean, or when someone tells you the Christmas tree isn't perfect. *Nothing can separate you from the love of God as seen in Jesus. Romans 8:38*

3. Be kind to others.

Remember that everyone carries a burden. Everyone needs a little kindness—a smile, a hug, a kind word, a gentle presence. We all need to experience God's love with skin on.

4. Count your blessings.

Remember that the key to a happy life is to appreciate what you have. Turn your thoughts to gratitude. Dwell on the positive, and your mood quickly lifts. Take some time each night during the holiday season to reflect on the good things that have happened in the day. Write them down and then read the list out loud to yourself. Offer this breath prayer: *Today I am thankful for...all God's good gifts.*