

Advent, Daily Readings – Week 3

Advent 2015 daily reflections

Monday December 14

Scripture Passages: Numbers 24:2-7, 15-17(a); Matthew 21:23-27

Scripture Verse: Jesus said to them, "I will ask you one question; if you tell me the answer, then I will also tell you by what authority I do these things." Matthew 21:24

Sometimes when we set out to do one thing, our destination changes, because along the way we open our eyes and see more clearly. Sometimes there might be others who don't understand us because they aren't seeing things the way we see them.

Jesus often encountered people who didn't understand him. The chief priests and elders at the temple in Jerusalem couldn't see who Jesus was or by what authority he did things. He invited them to open their eyes, to observe the actions of his cousin John and himself, to see the clues that there was a heavenly connection to their good works.

Jesus made a decision to not spell it out for the chief priests. "Neither will I tell you by what authority I am doing these things." The decision to see clearly had to come from them. Only then would they be able to change their attitude toward Jesus and be open to God's work.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, we praise you for the ability to see things in a new light. We thank you for those experiences that allow us to grow. Help us to honour your wisdom which is far greater than ours. Amen

Tuesday December 15

Scripture Passages: Zephaniah 3:1-2, 9-13 Matthew 21: 28-32

Scripture Verse: " Which of the two did the will of the Father..." Matthew 21:31

In the gospel for the Third Sunday in Advent, John the Baptist instructs us on how to "bear good fruit" by putting our faith into action.

Today Jesus tells a story of two sons whose words belied their actions. One said he would work in the vineyard and then didn't go. The other said he wouldn't work, but changed his mind and went.

One of the two ultimately did what his father wanted. That son has a kind of a conversion experience "later he changed his mind and went". In Advent we might reflect on how patient God is with us when we hesitate to act and do the right things. What counts is our honest attempt

to discern and do God's will. Statements of belief and obedience can be helpful to make but they become meaningful when they shape our actions and affect our lives.

In Jesus, God became completely and wholeheartedly human. He invites us to respond to him completely and wholeheartedly both in what we say and what we do each day.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, help us to be truthful in word and dependable in action. Amen

Wednesday December 16

Isaiah 45: 6-8, 18, 21-25; Psalm 85 Luke 7:18-23

Scripture Verse: When the two men had come to Jesus, they said, "John the Baptist has sent us to you to ask, 'Are you the one who is to come, or are we to await for another?'" Luke 7: 20

In Luke's Gospel, the healing power of God is emphasized. In our passage for today, John the Baptist wants confirmation that Jesus is the long-awaited Messiah. Jesus sends a message to John that people are being healed through the power Jesus has from God. Both Jesus and John find an affirmation of Jesus' mission in this sign. As Jesus would say later to the Pharisees, "I'm certainly not doing these wonderful things for people through the power of the devil."

Jesus came to show people how much God loves them. For many he encountered, God's care and concern for them became clear as they were healed from mental and physical distress. In Advent we are invited to bring the things that burden us to Jesus and to ask him to help us bear the burden.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, we praise you for your creation and we thank you for reaching out with loving healing care to people to save us from our foolish and destructive ways and bring us to a healthy and life-giving relationship with you. Amen

Thursday December 17

Scripture Passages: Genesis 49:2, 8-10; Matthew 1:1-17

Scripture Verse: An account of the genealogy of Jesus the Messiah, the son of David, the son of Abraham. Matthew 1:1

Judging by the popularity of websites such as ancestry.com, many people are fascinated by researching their family tree. It is almost as if they are driven to seek links that anchor themselves within a larger family context.

In the Gospel we read Matthew's version of the genealogy of Jesus' family going back to Abraham. Figuring prominently in Matthew's version is King David of the tribe of Judah. To David, the prophet Nathan, had promised a reign without end through his descendants. Jesus who was of David's family line, would keep that promise by beginning the Kingdom of God which lasts forever. It is a comprehensive family tree indeed that serves to authenticate the validity of Jesus as leader and as promised messiah.

In Advent we reflect on how, through Jesus, God's love for all people is proclaimed in our own time and to generations yet to come and we ask him to come, to build God's kingdom and teach us how to live. We reflect on what we might do to help bring about the Kingdom of God?

Prayer: Heavenly Father, we praise you for the leaders you have raised up and guided. Help us to walk in the path of Jesus so that the way we live our lives may help you build your Kingdom. Amen

Friday December 17

Scripture Passages: Jeremiah 23:5-8; Matthew 1:18-25

Scripture Verse: "Look, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and they shall name him Emmanuel." which means "God is with us" Matthew 1:23

"O Come, O Come Emmanuel" is a very popular Advent hymn. Because we sing it often, we may sometimes lose sight of the profound significance of the truth it celebrates. God is with us! God who is greater than the expanse of the universe and the reach of human history is with us and is within us in all we are and all that we do.

Sometimes it is easy to recognize the sacred—the divine in things like: a majestic mountain range, a glorious sunset, the wide-eyed smile of a baby, the touch of a loved one. In other circumstances, however—in the losses, the disappointments, the pain, the lousy things that are part of every human life—it can be more difficult to remember that God is with us. And perhaps the place where we struggle the most to be aware of God's presence is in the daily routine of everyday life.

Advent offers us time to reflect on the awesome mystery of the God revealed to us in Jesus—the God who is with us everywhere and always.

Prayer: "Emmanuel, help us to never forget that you have come and are always with us. Amen"