



MINISTRY. ATTITUDE. PRAYER. STUDY.
The Journey Worship Service — Advent Week 3
Candle of Joy

“Is There Room for Joy?”

Luke 1:39-56 (New Revised Standard)

39 In those days Mary set out and went with haste to a Judean town in the hill country, 40 where she entered the house of Zechariah and greeted Elizabeth. 41 When Elizabeth heard Mary’s greeting, the child leaped in her womb. And Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit 42 and exclaimed with a loud cry, “Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb. 43 And why has this happened to me, that the mother of my Lord comes to me? 44 For as soon as I heard the sound of your greeting, the child in my womb leaped for joy. 45 And blessed is she who believed that there would be a fulfillment of what was spoken to her by the Lord.” 46 And Mary said, “My soul magnifies the Lord, 47 and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior, 48 for he has looked with favor on the lowliness of his servant. Surely, from now on all generations will call me blessed; 49 for the Mighty One has done great things for me, and holy is his name. 50 His mercy is for those who fear him from generation to generation. 51 He has shown strength with his arm; he has scattered the proud in the thoughts of their hearts. 52 He has brought down the powerful from their thrones, and lifted up the lowly; 53 he has filled the hungry with good things, and sent the rich away empty. 54 He has helped his servant Israel, in remembrance of his mercy, 55 according to the promise he made to our ancestors, to Abraham and to his descendants forever.” 56 And Mary remained with her about three months and then returned to her home.

Things I’d like to remember from today’s sermon:

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Devotion material based on “Advent, A Calendar of Devotions” by Robert Dodd

MONDAY 12.14.09 Luke 1:39-45

How can we know when our encounter with God is real and not just an illusion or a delusion? Mary confirmed the validity of her own personal spiritual experience by visiting her cousin Elizabeth, who was well past the age of bearing children but who, the angel Gabriel told her, was nevertheless expecting a baby. In her own way Elizabeth knew what it was like to experience a miracle. Elizabeth was in a unique position to validate and confirm Mary's encounter with God!

- What individuals have helped you confirm your experience with God?

TUESDAY 12.15.09 Luke 1:46-55

How much more miraculous must the birth of Jesus have seemed to Joseph and Mary on that first holy night. This child was to have a destiny unlike any other. "And you shall call his name Jesus, for he will save his people," the angel Gabriel told Joseph in a dream (Matthew 1:21). Surely Joseph and Mary must have wondered what all of this could possibly mean as they looked down at the tiny infant who now lay sleeping peacefully in the manger before them.

- How has the birth of God's son Jesus made a difference in your life?

WEDNESDAY 12.16.09 Luke 2:8-14

It was business as usual for the shepherds who were keeping watch over their flocks on the night of our Savior's birth. There must be few things more boring than watching over sheep at night. Usually nothing eventful or exciting happens to disturb the silence or break up the monotony. But on this special night, an angel suddenly appeared to the shepherds, surrounded by a brilliant light that lit up the night sky. The angel spoke to them of an event that was taking place in Bethlehem. They could go and see for themselves that a Savior has been born.

- Put yourself in the shepherd's position. How would you have reacted to this news from the angels?

THURSDAY 12.17.09 Luke 2:10-11

What do you think our world would be like if Jesus had never been born?

- There would be no relationship with God as our heavenly Father.
 - The poor would be neglected and ignored.
 - There would be no Christians or Christian churches.
 - There would be no forgiveness of sins or hope for eternal .

If Jesus had not been born in a stable more than two thousand years ago, the world as we know it today would be quite different.

- How has the birth of Jesus impacted your life? Our world?

FRIDAY 12.18.09 Luke 2:12-16

It was preferable for Mary to give birth to Jesus in the quiet and privacy of a stable. The crowded inn was an unacceptable environment for a woman in her condition. So the innkeeper offered Joseph and Mary the accommodation of what was believed by some Bible scholars to be a new stable that had been recently carved into a limestone hill. However, it wasn't the circumstances but the timing that made the event extraordinary. As the shepherds arrived and entered the stable, they saw Joseph and Mary, and the baby lying in a manger, just as the angel said they would be.

- What does it mean to you for Jesus to be born in humble surroundings?

SATURDAY 12.19.09 Luke 2:17-20

After the shepherds visited Jesus in Bethlehem, they returned to their fields, but as they went on their way they were glorifying and praising God. Being a shepherd could never again be business as usual for them. They had encountered the extraordinary in the ordinary, and they could now praise and glorify God in their daily work.

Rightly understood, the story of Jesus' birth helps us encounter the extraordinary in the ordinary so that we will never look at or respond to life in quite the same way again.

- How have you encountered God through the ordinary places in your life?
