

MONDAY 12.16.24 - Romans 15:4

For everything that was written in the past was written to teach us, so that through the endurance taught in the Scriptures and the encouragement they provide we might have hope.

What does it mean when we say that someone is trustworthy? Generally, it means that a person has shown themselves to be loyal, dependable, and honest. It is someone we can confide in, and someone who has our best interest at heart. For us to know that someone is trustworthy we must have had a history with them. That is the only way we can determine that they have the qualities that make them trustworthy. As we search the scriptures, and our own lives, we realize that we serve a God who can be trusted and who has asked us to trust Him. Are you struggling with trusting God with some aspect of your life? Think about how He carried you in the past, then give your trials to Him today, trusting that He will carry you not only today, but in the days ahead. No matter what you are facing, if you trust God to get you through it, it will be okay.

SPACE FOR REFLECTION

TUESDAY 12.17.24 - Romans 5:3-4

³ *Not only so, but we also glory in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance;* ⁴ *perseverance, character; and character, hope.*

“A SHIP IN A HARBOR IS SAFE; BUT THAT’S NOT WHAT SHIPS WERE BUILT FOR.”

One of the certainties in life is that we will experience suffering. Often, we can’t control the suffering, but we can control how we respond. Through the Spirit we have the power to view tribulations as opportunities to develop our character and bring Glory to God. Continued faithfulness while suffering shapes who we are. As Paul points out, perseverance builds strong character.

As we face further challenges that character leans into a God that has been faithful, and we develop a confident expectation that God will walk with us once again. That expectation, or that HOPE time and time again, becomes reality.

No one I know has ever said, “I’d really like to experience more suffering.” Yet, Paul is reminding us: As we experience the transformative power of suffering, we become stronger and more resilient followers of Christ. And that is what WE were built for!

SPACE FOR REFLECTION

WEDNESDAY 12.18.24 - Luke 2:1-20

Jesus came into the world to save us from our sins. We have disobeyed God, and our sins have separated us from Him. None of our good works will forgive our sins and heal our broken relationship with God. That’s why Jesus came to earth. He lived a perfectly sinless life and offered Himself on the cross of Calvary as a sacrifice for our sins. He offers us a free gift of sins forgiven and eternal life. All we have to do is accept that gift. The moment you place your faith alone in Jesus alone for forgiveness, God gives you eternal life, and when you die, you’ll go to heaven to be with Him.

So, the meaning of Christmas isn’t simply that Jesus was born—but that Jesus was born to die. An angel told the shepherds, “Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is Christ the Lord.”

SPACE FOR REFLECTION

THURSDAY 12.19.24 - Isaiah 9:6

Isaiah heralded the future birth of the Savior with the proclamation, “For unto us a child is born” and referred to the coming Messiah as “Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace” (9:6), giving insights as to the nature of the Redeemer. Today, we don’t have to ask, “What Child Is This? For us, He is “Christ, the King” (William Dix 1865). We have Jesus as our risen Savior, a Redeemer who fills our hearts when we ask Him into our lives.

SPACE FOR REFLECTION

FRIDAY 12.20.24 - Micah 5:2

Charles Spurgeon preached on this verse. Bethlehem means both ‘House of Bread’ and ‘House of War’. How appropriate that Jesus is our Bread of Life and source of all growth and strength for us. He should come from a House of Bread. But to those who know him not, He, while bringing peace on earth, also brings war. He claimed, “I come to bring a sword” and turn children against their parents. Matt 10:34-35. How appropriate that He should arrive in a House of War. Then there is that old name ‘Ephrathah’ that the Jews of old named Bethlehem. That name means Fruitfulness.

While our world is filled with spoils, the earth covered with thorns and our intake corrupted by poisons of all kinds, the way of Bethlehem is all fruitfulness. Jesus is the “way, the truth and the life.” By him we are all healed and strengthened and set free. His fruit is of the true vine and his life flows through every true believer by the Spirit of the Living God, forever and ever.

SPACE FOR REFLECTION

E2 GROUP OPPORTUNITIES

SUNDAY MORNINGS - 9:40am

- Kids** CHILDREN'S CHURCH (Ages 4 – 4th Grade)
LOCATION: Camp Shiloh on the Lower Level
NURSERY (through Age 3) *9:40AM ONLY
LOCATION: Camp Shiloh on the Lower Level
- Youth** E2 CLASS (5th – 12th Grade)
LOCATION: Youth Activity Center (across street)
- Adults** **WINTER QUARTER** - began December 1st
LOCATION: B8-10 - Gene Steinruck - began Dec.1st.
EXPLORE THE BIBLE - Exodus and Leviticus remind us that imperfect people can depend on a perfect God to lead them through whatever wilderness they face.
LOCATION: B11 - Teacher: TBA - began Dec.1st.
BIBLE STUDIES FOR LIFE
Looking Forward to Christmas Be reminded that Christmas is, first and foremost, a celebration of Christ's coming to earth.
LOCATION: B1-2 - Joel Day - began Dec.1st
GOD NEVER GIVES UP ON YOU - What Jacob's Story Teaches Us About Grace, Mercy, and God's Relentless Love.
LOCATION: B11 - Shawn Devlin - began Jan. 19th
THE HEART OF WORSHIP - Learn how Scripture tells us God is the One we are to worship, and it shows us the ways we are to engage in worship, so we are drawn into a deeper walk with Him.

SUNDAY EVENINGS - 6:00pm

- Kids** MESSIAH KIDS (Kindergarten – 4th Grade)
LOCATION: Camp Shiloh on the Lower Level
- Youth** YOUTH GROUP (5th – 12th Grade)
LOCATION: Youth Activity Center (across street)
- Adults** LOCATION: **Dec. 15th Community Caroling Meet in the FAC - Refreshments to follow**

WINTER E2 SMALL GROUPS

WEDNESDAY EVENING STUDY - Dec. 4th-18th- 6:30pm- Room B8-10.
ADVENT 2024 - THE PURPOSE OF CHRISTMAS

Teaching from the Gospel of Luke in three sessions, bestselling author and pastor Rick Warren helps you see not one but three purposes of Christmas. Celebration, Salvation, and Reconciliation. With Barry Wills.

TO SIGN UP OR REQUEST MORE INFORMATION FOR ANY OF THESE GROUPS OR CLASSES, USE THE CONNECTION CARD IN THE BULLETIN. THANK YOU.

Luke 1:67-79 **The Songs of Christmas:** **Zechariah' Song of Hope**

The song of Zechariah is called the *Benedictus*, which is Latin for "Praise Be."

Jesus is the promised Messiah. He was born 2,000 years ago in the town of Bethlehem. He offers you three spiritual experiences to which He wants you to say "Yes."

1. S_____ (v. 69)

There are different types of deliverance. At this time in their history, the Jews were longing for physical deliverance (vv. 71, 74).

However, in His First Coming, the Messiah would offer the world a different kind of deliverance—a spiritual deliverance (v. 77).

2. S_____ (v. 75)


The moment you place your trust in Jesus for eternal life, God sets you apart. You become positionally holy before Him (2 Corinthians 5:21).

Now He wants you to be set apart to Him practically. He wants you to live a life of holiness for Him (Romans 12:1-2).

3. S_____ (v. 74)

Like John, we have been given the privilege of preparing the way for the Lord. We do this by proclaiming His offer of salvation in a way that people can understand it, accept it, and be forgiven for their sins.

We are to show people the way of salvation. We are to reach out to those who sit in darkness and the shadow of death. We are to love them and show them the light and declare to them how they can have their sins forgiven through faith in Christ.

 Edifying and Equipping Every Day

TAKING OUR NEXT STEP TOGETHER IN THE WORD



December 16 - December 20

INTRODUCTION:

Part of our purpose and strategy as a church is to Edify and Equip (E2) every believer. We desire to see every person take their next step with God, both individually as well as with families and small groups (E2 Communities). This devotional is to aid us in just that. We invite you to join us in daily devotion.

OVERVIEW:

Monday's and Tuesday's readings will be a follow up on Sunday's message from December 15th, "The Songs of Christmas", with Pastor Doug Lyon. Wednesday's through Friday's devotions will help prepare us for the message on December 22nd, "The Songs of Christmas", with Pastor Doug Lyon.

KEY/MEMORY VERSE:

Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you;
he is Christ the Lord.
Luke 2:11