

Daily Reflection on Scripture Week of December 4 Joseph's Invitation



This is how the birth of Jesus Christ took place. When Mary his mother was engaged to Joseph, before they were married, she became pregnant by the Holy Spirit. Joseph her husband was a righteous man. Because he didn't want to humiliate her, he decided to call off their engagement quietly. As he was thinking about this, an angel from the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, "Joseph son of David, don't be afraid to take Mary as your wife, because the child she carries was conceived by the Holy Spirit. She will give birth to a son, and you will call him Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins." Now all of this took place so that what the Lord had spoken through the prophet would be fulfilled: Look! A virgin will become pregnant and give birth to a son, and they will call him, Emmanuel. When Joseph woke up, he did just as an angel from God commanded and took Mary as his wife. But he didn't have sexual relations with her until she gave birth to a son. Joseph called him Jesus.

Matthew 1:18-25

If you would like to receive the Sacred Pause on your phone, text "crossroads" to 41411.

Sunday, December 4, 2016

Matthew 1:20 But after he had considered this, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, "Joseph son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary home as your wife, because what is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit."

Reflection: Joseph and Mary likely had hopes and dreams for their future together. But then the angel Gabriel came to this unsuspecting couple, and their dreams turned in a different direction. God has an uncanny way of stopping us in our tracks, pulling us away from self-serving dreams that are always too small, and challenging us to serve the God of much bigger dreams. Even in his wildest dreams, Joseph probably never thought he would have to take care of the mother of God let alone the Son of God. But God decided to call an ordinary family into the larger drama of salvation. God's big dreams always swallow up our tiny ones.

Sacred Pause: Lord, you invite me to pay attention to the dreams you have for me. Dreams to make an extraordinary difference with my ordinary life.

Monday, December 5, 2016

Hebrews 12:1-2 Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight and the sin that clings so closely, and let us run with perseverance the race that is set before us, looking to Jesus the pioneer and perfecter of our faith, who for the sake of the joy that was set before him endured the cross, disregarding its shame, and has taken his seat at the right hand of the throne of God.

Reflection: The book of Hebrews was written to a church that was getting lost in its sense of mission and starting to go through the motions without focus, without vigilance and without energy. Their hands were growing weak, their will to serve and live in the way of Jesus was waning. It was just becoming easier to go with the flow than to run the marathon. So the author of this text has one imperative for the Hebrews: Run! (12:1). Run the race set before you! Don't stroll, don't meander, don't wander about aimlessly. Run as in a race with a finish line and with everything hanging on it.

Losing our drive to mirror the compassion, wisdom, service, and forgiveness of Jesus is normal. Motivation,

after all, is a tricky skill to master, which is why we have to learn how to remind one another why we started running this race in the first place. Together we can join this great cloud of witnesses — a divine group of cheerleaders who believe victory is at hand!

Sacred Pause: Lord, help me to accept your invitation to cheer others on with your compassion, forgiveness, service, and wisdom. Renew my passion to serve.

Tuesday December 6, 2016

Scripture: Psalm 146:5 Blessed are those whose help is the God of Jacob, whose hope is in the Lord their God.

Reflection: What do you mean when you say “I hope so”? While we can put our hope in political leaders, in friends and family, or in our own best efforts, this Psalm makes it clear that all those things will fade away. And unlike the princes of ancient Israel, and many leaders today, the Lord cares for more than just the wealthy and powerful. The Lord promises in [Psalm 146](#) to care for people who are fearful, in grief, oppressed, and marginalized. No matter who you are or how hopeless you may feel at times, God can always be a source of hope. In times of despair, look to the ways of God’s unconditional love as a beacon of hope for today and your hope for tomorrow.

Sacred Pause: God, you invite me to put my trust in your unconditional love. Help me to welcome that invitation and then put it into practice.

Wednesday, December 7, 2016

Galatians 5:13 For you were called to freedom, brothers and sisters; only do not use your freedom as an opportunity for self-indulgence, but through love become servants to one another.

Reflection: Service is not a glamorous concept, and yet caring for the wellbeing of others is what God has in mind for us. Why? Because God knows service not only transforms the situations of those we serve, it transforms *us*. Service is a two way blessing; when we serve we throw off the shackles of individualism that cause alienation, disconnection, and fear. Service is a great way to put aside our self-centeredness and notice how we are connected, even indebted, to others. When we begin to see the genuine needs of others, it diminishes our sense of entitlement. None of us became the people we are alone, but by the sacrifice and investment friends, family, and mentors over our lifetime — including the saving work of God in our lives.

Sacred Pause: Lord, you invite me to serve others as you served. In what is left of today may I say yes to your invitation to serve and bless others.

Thursday, December 8, 2016

Scripture: Numbers 11:17 I will take some of the power of the Spirit that is on you and put it on them.

Reflection: In Numbers chapter 11, God told Moses to identify seventy of Israel’s elders to share the burden of leadership. God followed this with a promise to equip those seventy leaders with a portion of the Spirit that God had given to Moses. In this way God again provided for peace in the camp of Israel, this time through the gift of the Holy Spirit. Through events like this in the life of Moses we gain a clear indication that God equipped Moses through his personal daily experiences by the power of the Holy Spirit. So it is with us. Wherever you have been, and whatever you have gone through, the Holy Spirit can and will use your story to bring love and joy to people around you.

Sacred Pause: Holy Spirit you invite me to use my story to help someone else who may be struggling today. May I welcome your invitation to share my story.

Friday, December 9, 2016

Scripture: Matthew 13:54-57 He came to his hometown and began to teach the people in their synagogue, so that they were astounded and said, “Where did this man get this wisdom and these deeds of power? Is not this the carpenter’s son? Is not his mother called Mary? And are not his brothers James and Joseph and Simon and Judas? And are not all his sisters with us? Where then did this man get all this?”

Reflection: It's clear from Matthew's gospel the crowds weren't quite sure what to make of Jesus. Here he was teaching and preaching in ways that astounded the audience, but that wasn't the Jesus they were familiar with. For years they had watched Jesus hammer nails into wood, lay stone foundations for buildings, and perhaps craft toys or furniture. Jesus got up each morning to go to work, just like so many of us. In so doing Jesus affirms the dignity and value of our own work. Work is not beneath God's concern. Because Jesus sees the value in work, we too can approach our work each day as an exercise of service to God, using the skills and abilities we have been given to make a difference in the world.

Sacred Pause: Jesus, as a carpenter you show that daily work has sacred value. In so doing you invite me to see my daily work as sacred work as well.

Saturday, December 10, 2016

Scripture: Luke 4:38 Simon's mother-in-law was suffering from a high fever, and they asked Jesus to help her.

Reflection: Simon was concerned for his mother-in-law. She was in the grip of a high fever that could easily kill her. Jesus likely knew that Simon's heart was filled with anxiety and fear. So he came to Simon's house, where "they asked Jesus to help her." In his reflection on this story, Rev. Dr. Reginald Smith, senior pastor at Roosevelt Park Community Christian Church in Grand Rapids, Michigan, says this: "What was this woman's first reaction to the deep healing of her body? She likely felt her strength return like an old friend. She quickly resumed her place as a caretaker in Simon's home. Her first response to her healing was to serve others, as she had always done. It was how she expressed her gratitude to Jesus. She served others as a living witness of God's life-giving power." As we go through our daily routines, may we be ready servants in our response for all that God has done for us.

Sacred Pause: Lord, your love heals my mind, body, and soul. Your healing invites me to be a healing presence to others. Help me welcome Your invitation.