

Friday

CHRISTMAS MUSIC

Those who have been ransomed by the Lord will return. They will enter Jerusalem singing, crowned with everlasting joy. Sorrow and mourning will disappear, and they will be filled with joy and gladness. (Isaiah 35:10 NLT)

Christmas and music – they just go together, don't they? 'Mary's Boy Child', a modern Christmas carol is a favorite of many people. It was written by Jester Hairston, a grandson of American slaves. Jester knew that, despite the injustice and pain suffered by his ancestors, God's love overcomes all things.

"Long time ago in Bethlehem, so the Holy Bible said, Mary's boy child Jesus Christ, was born on Christmas Day. Now Joseph and his wife, Mary, came to Bethlehem that night, They found no place to bear her child, not a single room was in sight. By and by they found a little nook in a stable all forlorn, And in a manger cold and dark, Mary's little boy child was born."

There is still hatred and violence in our world today. However, God's unfailing love will overcome and bring salvation and eternal life for all who believe in the finished work of Jesus who came into this world as a baby, just as each one of us did. Whether it's individuals struggling with addiction, homeless people living on the streets, refugees fleeing violence and terror attacks, or people caught up in the insecurity of finances needed for everyday living, God comes to let us know He is with us. God has a life planned for us that will last forever. Jesus was triumphant over all injustice. Because Jesus lives for evermore, we also will live for evermore. That's truly worth singing about, isn't it?

Here is a trustworthy saying that deserves full acceptance: Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners--of whom I am the worst. (1 Timothy 1:15 NIV)

Prayer: Heavenly Father, Thank You for sending Jesus to earth to save us. He was not born into luxury but was born in a cold dark stable. You chose Jesus' birthplace and we believe it was to give us hope that whatever our circumstances, You have a plan for us, for You are Immanuel, God with us. Amen

Weekend

ORDINARY DAY IN AN ORDINARY WEEK

Is it possible that God could do something so wonderful in us today that our lives would impact history for the Kingdom of God? How might we live in this ordinary day that would make us available for the extraordinary?

Blessed is she who has believed that the Lord would fulfill his promises to her! (Luke 1:45 NIV)

God had an extraordinary day planned for Mary when He sent the angel Gabriel to tell her she would conceive God's Son and give birth to the Saviour of the world. While shock, confusion and fear may have been some of her initial feelings, Mary was quick to embrace God's plan for her. Her response to the angel's news was, ***"I am the Lord's servant," Mary answered. "May your word to me be fulfilled."*** (Luke 1:38a NIV)

Mary saw herself as the Lord's servant, willing to do whatever He asked. She wasn't concerned about what her parents might think, or even her friends. Mary's confidence was in her knowledge of God and His perfect love for her.

God has wonderful plans for each one of us just like He had for Mary. As we follow Him, His plans may gradually be revealed to us, or they may leap into our lives in an instant.

Today is an extraordinary day because the living God is making His good plans known to us. Just like it was for Mary, this ordinary day may become a not-so-ordinary day if we are willing to embrace God's plan for our lives and allow God to work in us.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, Together with Mary I pray, "May your word to me be fulfilled." Help me to trust You and embrace the extraordinary things You desire to do in my seemingly ordinary life. Amen

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LIFE WITH GOD IN RECOVERY DAILY MEDITATIONS



Week 51

Monday

PRINCIPLES BEFORE PERSONALITIES

As the Twelve Traditions are read at meetings we attend, we usually join the reader on the final phrase with the words, "principles before personalities."

God sees all of us as individuals. We don't have to be rich or famous. God finds the little ones, the hurting ones, the forgotten ones, and does such amazing things in each of our lives that generations down the line will have stories to tell of how we were blessed and were also a blessing to others. This is the Christmas story and Mary's role in it.

Mary: Oh, how my soul praises the Lord. How my spirit rejoices in God my Savior! For he took notice of his lowly servant girl, and from now on all generations will call me blessed. For the Mighty One is holy, and he has done great things for me. He shows mercy from generation to generation to all who fear him. (Luke 1:46-50 NLT)

We are the most unlikely of persons to influence others for good and yet that's exactly who we are because it is "principles before personalities" and the principle that God operates on is that He can make something wonderful out of every life surrendered to Him. It's not our own strength we rely on because we know we are powerless, but the Mighty One, the God who did great things for Mary, is also ready and able to do great things for us. With Mary our hearts respond and say, ***"Oh, how my soul praises the Lord, how my spirit rejoices in God my Saviour."***

Prayer: Heavenly Father, I desire to be a person who is known for great good rather than for great harm. Thank You for taking notice of me and for doing great things in and for me. Help me to be a person who will do great things for others because You live in me. Amen

WHAT DOES GOSSIP SOUND LIKE?

Gossip shows up in our lives in many forms. Here are some types of gossip and what God's Word says about each of them. In which of the following categories does the tendency to gossip affect me?

1. Slander spreads rumors or lies about a person in order to damage them. **Hiding hatred makes you a liar; slandering others makes you a fool.** (Proverbs 10:18 NLT)

2. Rumors abound. We hear something and even though it's not confirmed we pass it along. Gossip spreads and harm is done. **Careful words make for a careful life; careless talk may ruin everything.** (Proverbs 13:3 MSG)

3. Innuendo and planting seeds of doubt question another person's character or actions. **By our speech we can ruin the world, turn harmony to chaos, throw mud on a reputation, send the whole world up in smoke and go up in smoke with it, smoke right from the pit of hell.** (James 3:6 MSG)

4. It's easy to complain about things which are not perfect or aren't going our way. **Complain if you must, but don't lash out. Keep your mouth shut, and let your heart do the talking. Build your case before God and wait for his verdict.** (Psalm 4:4-5 MSG)

5. Bad-mouthing, back-stabbing, back-biting. These words seek to describe the harmful practice of speaking negative and harmful words about someone who isn't there to defend themselves. The Bible says: **Do not judge others, and you will not be judged. Don't speak evil against each other, dear brothers and sisters. If you criticize and judge each other, then you are criticizing and judging God's law.** (Matthew 7:1; James 4:11 NLT)

God hates gossip. God wants us to use kind words in all circumstances so that the practice of gossip will decrease or stop altogether.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, You hate gossip because of the harm it does to everyone involved. Help me to speak kind words and deal with difficulties in an open, kind, and truthful way. Amen

SELF-ESTEEM

Our self-esteem is based on how we evaluate and see ourselves. Some people see little value in themselves while others rate themselves highly. A person with low self-esteem may have trouble expressing their needs and ideas to another and may have little confidence in themselves to make right decisions. They are more likely to criticize themselves to someone else. The truth is, God made all of us. We are His creation and God has put high value on each person regardless of their status in life.

Lord, you are our Father. We are the clay. You are the potter. Your hands made all of us. (Isaiah 64:8 NIRV)

When we have made a mess of our lives, we often think that the consequences of our actions in the past define who we are in the future. We have low self-esteem and do not see a way forward. God sees things differently from us. Just like a potter, God will take a piece of flawed clay and rework it until what He has formed is perfected for the use He has in mind. When we are weary and burdened with life, God wants us to come to Him and be made new.

Come to me, all you who are tired and are carrying heavy loads. I will give you rest. Become my servants and learn from me. I am gentle and free of pride. You will find rest for your souls. (Matthew 11:28-29 NIRV)

God does not want our self-esteem to be less than the value He places on us. He does not want us to be prideful and think of ourselves more highly than we ought. He wants us to think of ourselves with sober judgment, in the light of His love for us. God wants to reproduce His character in us.

You were taught to be made new in your thinking. You were taught to start living a new life. It is created to be truly good and holy, just as God is. (Ephesians 4:23-24 NIRV)

Prayer: Heavenly Father, please help me to see myself as You see me. Help me to take every thought captive to You so that You can perfect my way of thinking and enable me to become the person You created me to be. Amen

DEALING WITH CRISIS

Joseph and Mary were a family in crisis. Mary, by God's plan and action, was pregnant prior to being married to Joseph. They had probably dealt with the undeserved community backlash for several months and now with the birth of the child imminent, they needed to make a long journey to the hometown of Joseph's ancestors to be counted in a census that was related to being taxed.

Throughout this past year, most nations in the world seem to have stumbled from one crisis to another. Those of us who have come through addictive and destructive lifestyles know about un-ending crises. The good news is that when life throws us a curve ball, God wants us to experience the stabilizing comfort of His presence and to trust His promise that He is with us every step of the way.

In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world. Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. (John 16:33b, Philippians 4:6 NIV)

We do not face any crisis alone, we do it with God, and He has committed to helping us be overcomers. Our part is to include God in what is going on and to seek His guidance in every situation. It is best to learn to do that when the pressure isn't on, but we can be assured that whenever we do call out for God's help, He hears us and is available to help.

God may not immediately change our situation. He may change us so we are able to do more than we thought possible, and in the process benefit from becoming wiser. In the middle of pressure, none of us like the seemingly endless endurance, but God knows what we need to face, what is yet to come, and He carefully prepares us for what is ahead – even in times of crisis.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, please comfort and quiet my heart and help me to trust You. Teach me Your ways that I might gain wisdom. I want to become mature and, as You direct, persevere through any pressure I might face. Amen