

Friday

MERRY CHRISTMAS

Christmas -- it really happened! God came to our planet. We may never comprehend how or even why He chose to do this, but the fact remains, He came by way of a Bethlehem manger. We matter to God, the God who created the heavens and the earth.

When I consider your heavens, the work of your fingers, the moon and the stars, which you have set in place, what is mankind that you are mindful of them, human beings that you care for them? (Psalm 8:3-4 NIV)

Jesus was born at the time, in the place, and to the people God planned from before creation. Throughout time God sent various signs so people would recognize Jesus as the One He sent to save us. Some did. Some didn't. The fact is, Jesus came to save us and obeyed the plan of His Father even to death on a cross.

We are significant people because of our connection to God through Jesus Christ whose birth we celebrate on Christmas Day. Throughout His life Jesus clearly demonstrated who He was as He taught and healed people who came to Him. Jesus drew individuals to Himself with His tender compassion and miraculous power. Jesus invites us to respond to Him on this Christmas day.

Yet I was the one who taught Israel to walk. I took my people up in my arms, but they did not acknowledge that I took care of them. I drew them to me with affection and love. I picked them up and held them to my cheek; I bent down to them and fed them. (Hosea 11:3-4 GNB)

The coming of Jesus to our world, and to us, is a powerful witness to the truth that our ordinary and simple lives matter to the God who created us. When we turn to God, we are assured of His love and acceptance because of the finished work of His son Jesus here on earth. Jesus' birth changed everything for us. Merry Christmas!

Prayer: Gracious God, Thank You for Jesus who was born into this world to be my Saviour and to show me that my life has meaning and purpose. Thank You for the love and acceptance I receive from You because of Jesus' obedience to Your will for His life. Amen

Weekend

THE DAY AFTER CHRISTMAS

At Christmas, many people make a special effort to return home and be with their family. For those of us, who for many reasons, are unable to gather with family at Christmas, is it still possible to celebrate a full and rich Christmas without being fake? The lives of Joseph and Mary and Jesus teach us that it is possible.

In those days Caesar Augustus issued a decree that a census should be taken of the entire Roman world. Joseph also went up from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to Judea, to Bethlehem the town of David, because he belonged to the house and line of David. He went there to register with Mary, who was pledged to be married to him and was expecting a child. While they were there, the time came for the baby to be born, and she gave birth to her firstborn, a son. She wrapped him in cloths and placed him in a manger, because there was no guest room available for them. (Luke 2:1, 3-7 NIV)

At Christmas, we celebrate Jesus who chose displacement from His Father in Heaven and came to earth in the form of a human baby so He could redeem us from the power of sin. Until the fulfillment of time and the invitation to come to His Father's house, Jesus, in the power of His Holy Spirit, will be with us wherever we may be here on this earth. This Christmas we need to look at our hearts before we look at our circumstances and see the amazing guest who shares this season with us. Life may not be as perfect as we would like it to be, and we may be struggling to cope, but Jesus is with us! Let's be at home with Jesus this Christmas season as we celebrate His birth.

Prayer: Thank You Jesus for coming to be with me in my imperfect world. I want to make room for You in my heart and share each day of this Christmas season together with You. Amen

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LIFE WITH GOD IN RECOVERY DAILY MEDITATIONS



Week 52

Monday

MISSING THE MEANING

Christmas decorations have been up for weeks and malls are bustling with shoppers who are captivated by the Christmas displays and lights while they shop for special gifts for family and friends. Today, let's pause and remember and give thanks for Jesus, the reason we celebrate the season.

The one who is the true light, who gives light to everyone, was coming into the world. He came into the very world he created, but the world didn't recognize him. He came to his own people, and even they rejected him. But to all who believed him and accepted him, he gave the right to become children of God. (John 1:9-12 NLT)

Christmas day is approaching and many people are preoccupied with getting things done for the planned festivities, so we have no time left to celebrate Jesus. We complain about the demands and activities of the season while others are struggling with loneliness. Some may be overwhelmed with shame regarding their current position in life. Some are distant from their families. Others may struggle financially to provide gifts for their children.

Today, let's take time to intentionally leave behind the busyness of the season and spend time with God. Jesus is the reason for the season. Let's invite His presence into our lives. Let's simplify the things that need doing. Let's shift from exhausting activity to the joy of being receivers of God's generous love. Let's fill this season with direction and meaning as we include Jesus in our thoughts and activities.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, Thank You for the gift of Jesus to the world. Help me to stop fretting about things that are troublesome or out of my control, and truly celebrate Jesus, for He is Immanuel, God with us. Amen

A CROWDED CHRISTMAS

Three days before Christmas and it seems like it's crowded and busy everywhere. Traffic on the roads and in parking lots is clogged. Airports are full of people on the move. People in long lines wait to have their purchases scanned and paid for. People, people everywhere!

Jesus was born into a busy crowded world. His parents, along with thousands of others, had to leave their hometown and travel several days on foot to get to the crowded city of Bethlehem so the census ordered by the Roman government could be taken. The only place Mary and Joseph could find to rest was in a smelly cave which housed animals. That's where Jesus was born.

When the world around us is busy, it's easy to feel forgotten and uncared for. The needs we have might go unseen and unmet by others. We are left alone to sort out challenges that are made harder by the many events of the holiday season. Life feels unmanageable and we are faced with our own powerlessness.

Now may the Lord of peace himself give you his peace at all times and in every situation. The Lord be with you all. (2 Thessalonians 3:16 NLT)

Whatever we are feeling during these busy times before Christmas Day, God invites us to stop, take a break, and be filled with His presence and peace. The birth of Jesus Christ demonstrates clearly that God sees us, God cares about us, and if invited, will come close to us. Jesus became a human being and entered our earthly experiences and our pain. He can sympathize with all our weaknesses. If we invite Him, God is truly with us in every situation.

"Comfort, yes, comfort My people!" Says your God. (Psalm 40:1 NKJV)

Prayer: Heavenly Father, help me not to get caught up in the mad rush of these pre-Christmas days. Help me to take this day one moment at a time and give thanks for your love and grace in sending Jesus into the world to be my Saviour. Amen

CHRISTMAS COMFORT AND REDEEMING GRACE

People often travel from one end of the country to the other to be with family during the Christmas season. Christmas celebrations with family are meant to strengthen the bonds of love and caring as together we remember God's unfailing love and care for each person. However, for many of us, memories that trouble our hearts begin to surface as we anticipate these family gatherings. Our comfort level goes down as we think about things that happened to us in the past. God's desire is that we think of Christmas in a different way.

GOD made my life complete when I placed all the pieces before him. When I got my act together, he gave me a fresh start. Now I'm alert to GOD's ways; I don't take God for granted. Every day I review the ways he works; I try not to miss a trick. I feel put back together, and I'm watching my step. GOD rewrote the text of my life when I opened the book of my heart to his eyes. (Psalm 18:20-24 MSG)

Jesus came to earth to pay the penalty for the world's sin which includes ours. When we repent of our sin and accept that Jesus paid with His life for our sin, we will choose not to withhold forgiveness of others who sinned against us. God's grace has been freely poured out on us, so we have ample supply to generously grace others with the grace we have received from Him.

The birth of Jesus truly was the dawn of redeeming grace! The famous carol "Silent Night" speaks of this in the lyrics: *Silent night, Holy night, Son of God, Loves pure light. Radiant beams from thy holy face, with the dawn of redeeming grace. Jesus Lord at thy birth. Jesus Lord at thy birth.*

Now may the Lord of peace himself give you his peace at all times and in every situation. The Lord be with you all. (2 Thessalonians 3:16 NLT)

Prayer: Heavenly Father, As I prepare for Christmas and family gatherings, I ask you to fill my heart with Your love so that, together with others, I can celebrate Christmas well. Amen

THE GIFTED LIFE

Statistics tell us that 7 out of 10 shoppers on Christmas Eve will be men doing panic shopping for those they love. Thankfully, God is not a last-minute planner. From before the creation of the world God planned the amazing gift of forgiveness and eternal life with Him for each one of us.

For God made Christ, who never sinned, to be the offering for our sin, so that we could be made right with God through Christ. (2 Corinthians 5:21 NLT)

Christmas is a time to give thanks for the birth of Jesus. This Christmas we can bless others, not so much by spending lots of money on gifts, but by sharing ourselves with them. The extravagant love of Jesus flowing through us will help us love and serve our family and friends. Just being with family and friends will bring more joy into our lives than anything we could ever purchase.

Whatever is good and perfect is a gift coming down to us from God our Father, who created all the lights in the heavens. He never changes or casts a shifting shadow. He chose to give birth to us by giving us his true word. And we, out of all creation, became his prized possession. (James 1:17-18 NLT)

What gifts of thankfulness and worship will we offer to Jesus this Christmas season? What have we received from God that we can share? What ability do we have to help others? Just spending time with someone can make a difference in their lives. Listening to what is troubling another and perhaps offering help in the situation may be significant. In what small or large ways can we offer something to another person that says, "I care about you."

I have told you these things so that you will be filled with my joy. Yes, your joy will overflow! This is my commandment: Love each other in the same way I have loved you. (John 15:11-12 NLT)

Prayer: Heavenly Father, Thank you for the gift of forgiveness and eternal life through Jesus. Help me to give the gift of love and caring to others as together we celebrate Christmas. Amen