

What Does Christmas Mean To You?

A Voice In The Wilderness

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WEEKLY DEVOTIONAL: DECEMBER 13-18, 2021

LUKE 3:4-17

MONDAY - December 13, 2021

Zephaniah 3:14-15 Sing, O Daughter of Zion; shout, O Israel! Rejoice and exult with all your heart, O daughter Jerusalem! The Lord has taken away the judgments against you, he has turned away your enemies.

Luke 3:4 (John the Baptist proclaimed) As it is written in the book of the words of Isaiah the prophet: "A voice of one calling in the desert, 'Prepare the way for the Lord, make straight paths for him.'"

REFLECTION: During the summer, when I was growing up, a group of neighborhood kids and I would play hide and seek until it was dusk. Out of the stillness of the night a voice would ring out, calling our names to come home. In today's text Luke repeats the prophet Isaiah, (Isaiah 40:3-5), warning that one day a voice will be calling in the wilderness, 'Prepare the way for the Lord, make straight paths for him.'

God, every day of life is still calling out in the wilderness. Matthew 17:5 "But even as he (Peter) spoke, a bright cloud overshadowed them, (Peter, James, John) and a voice from the cloud said, "This is my dearly loved Son, who brings me great joy. Listen to him." The Baby Jesus is providing a way for each of us to come home to our Father's house.

PRAYER TIME: *I sing aloud to you O God! With my heart and mind I continue to rejoice and exult you as my God. Lord Jesus, the world changed on the day of your birth. Praise You for saving me from the judgement of God the Father. Blessed is your name. In Jesus' Name, Amen.*



TUESDAY - December 14, 2021

Zephaniah 3:15 The king of Israel, the Lord, is in your midst; you shall fear disaster no more. On that day it shall be said to Jerusalem: Do not fear.

Luke 3:7-8a John said to the crowds coming out to be baptized by him, "You brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the coming wrath? Produce fruit in keeping with repentance.

REFLECTION: Christmas time means sharing material things with others, but more than that it is all about sharing our sincere love for one another. Love comes from having respect for another, and learning to trust them. The message of John the Baptist is about trusting God. When we do, our hearts will be full of God's love. To be full of His love we must first repent from the bruising sins we commit. Repentance means agreeing with God about who we are and what we have done. Coming to the truth about ourselves is a sure and certain sign of God's grace touching our lives. Repentance produces a mind eager to know God's love.

PRAYER TIME: *I thank you Lord Jesus, for you are the King of Israel. You are a compassionate man, who has come to live in our midst and You help and guide me. I praise your name Lord, because you continue to cast away my fears and anxieties. Holy Lord, please give me peace and joy this Christmas. In Jesus' Name, Amen.*

WEDNESDAY - December 15, 2021

Zephaniah 3:16-17 O Zion; do not let your hands grow weak. The Lord, your God, is in your midst, a warrior who gives victory.

Luke 3:9-11 (as they were listening to John the Baptist) "The ax is already at the root of the trees, and every tree that does not produce good fruit will be cut down and thrown in to the fire." "What should we do then?" the crowd asked. John answered, "Anyone who has two shirts should share with the one who has none, and anyone who has food should do the same."

REFLECTION: At Christmas time I get excited about giving gifts to strangers. This time of the year millions of people are in the mood to give. Giving is a human condition and you do not need to be a Christian to give. Groups like Toys for Tots, Operation Christmas Child, and Make-A-Wish Foundation are all places where you can give. Even the local church needs additional funds to spread the Good News. I pray you all have a place you can share your wealth and abundance with those in need. The laughter and joy we all get from giving is powerful. When others come to have a relationship with God the Father of Jesus Christ, it brings us laughter and fills us with pure joy.

PRAYER TIME: *O God of Zion, do not let your hands grow weak in bringing me to your throne. You, O God, are with me and give me victory over my sins. I will rejoice this Christmas because you have come into my life. In Jesus' Name, Amen.*

THURSDAY - December 16, 2021

Zephaniah 3:17 God will take great delight in you; in his love he will no longer rebuke you, but will rejoice over you with singing." He will exult over you with loud singing as on a day of festival.

Luke 3:12-14 (as they listened to John the Baptist) Even tax collectors came to be baptized. "Teacher," they asked, "what should we do?" "Don't collect any more than you are required to," he told them. Then some soldiers asked him, "And what should we do?" He replied, "Don't extort money and don't accuse people falsely—be content with your pay."

REFLECTION: All Christians are taught by God to love one another; 1 Thessalonians 4:9 *"But we don't need to write to you about the importance of loving each other, for God himself has taught you to love one another."* A husband towards his wife, a wife towards her husband, a child towards a parent, and a parent toward a child; each is responsible to live with the life of Christ in them. Most people live a life of greed. Being aggressive and cruel is common. Jesus commands us to go beyond our comfort zone and act rightly in all our relationships. Relinquish your heart to the guidance of God's grace. Christmas time is a good time to heal broken relationships in your family and among friends. May God provide you with the wisdom and the grace to do this.

PRAYER TIME: *Lord God, as I say my prayers today I will continue to be overjoyed knowing you have renewed my life now and forever. Your love is more wonderful than I could have ever imagined. Help me to repair the brokenness in my life. In Jesus' Name, Amen.*

FRIDAY - December 17, 2021

Zephaniah 3:18-19 (God) "I will remove from you all who mourn over the loss of your appointed festivals, which is a burden and reproach for you. At that time I will deal with all who oppressed you. I will rescue the lame.

Luke 3:15 (as they listened to John the Baptist) The people were waiting expectantly and were all wondering in their hearts if John might possibly be the Messiah.

REFLECTION: The power to forgive, and be forgiven, comes from the Holy Spirit. It is a result of desiring to have a freedom in Christ like never before. Once we have come clean, those dogs no longer have power over us. The entire Bible, from cover to cover, is a series of historical stories about people being brought back into a loving relationship with God. He has restored life, and restored it with a purpose.

PRAYER TIME: *As I prepare to worship this week I will exalt you, O God. I will sing praises to you. Now that I know your Son is coming again I wait with great anticipation. Praise you Lord Jesus for opening the gates of heaven for me. In Jesus' Name, Amen.*

SATURDAY - December 18, 2021

Zephaniah 3:19-20 "At that time I will gather you. At that time I will bring you home. I will give you honor and praise among all the peoples of the earth when I restore your fortunes before your very eyes." says the Lord.

Luke 3:16 John answered them all, "I baptize you with water. But one who is more powerful than I will come, the straps of whose sandals I am not worthy to untie. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire.

REFLECTION: The Christmas story is set with the background of the Holy Spirit in action. Luke 1:13-15 ...*"Do not be afraid, Zechariah; your prayer has been heard. Your wife Elizabeth will bear you a son, and you are to call him John. (John the Baptist)...he will be filled with the Holy Spirit even before he is born. Again, the Holy Spirit comes to Mary . Luke 1:34-35 "How will this be," Mary asked the angel, "since I am a virgin?" The angel answered, "The Holy Spirit will come on you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you."* After the birth, death, and resurrection of Jesus, the Holy Spirit comes to us. May you remember when you were filled with joy, because the Spirit revealed to you the Christ. Merry Christmas.

PRAYER TIME: *Lord Jesus, your Spirit of fire is renowned and is a witness among all the peoples of the earth. I pray this advent season that others I know will also be restored to the new life. In Jesus' Name, Amen.*