

DAILY BIBLE READINGS - Week of December 16, 2018

**THEME: "Ministry of People"
PARENTS**

SundayRead Luke 2:1-10

"And Joseph also went up from Galilee, out of the city of Nazareth, into Judaea, unto the city of David, which is called Bethlehem (because he was of the house and lineage of David): to be taxed with Mary his espoused wife, being great with child." What an amazing high calling of God for the lives of these two young people! How many in their late teens and early adulthood are planning for a wedding! But this young couple was in for a huge surprise. God had picked their home to be the family in which His Son would be born. These two young people were people of faith, and God knew that they were very serious about their faith, so much so that He could trust them with the birth of a child that would change our calendar (A. D. and B. C.). How about their faith! Mary had the questions any of us would have had. What the angel was suggesting was an impossibility, and if it were true, no one would believe Mary's explanation. Did not Mary have to wonder how she could convince Joseph of the news of her being pregnant, and all the others who may wonder? But after the angel said what he had to say in the way of an explanation, Mary trusted God: *"Be it unto me according to thy word."* There were still many questions, but she would proceed by faith. God honored that faith despite the lingering questions and uncertainties. When Joseph had a hard time believing Mary's explanation and was ready to call off the whole idea of marriage to Mary, God intervened and did what Mary could not do. God sent the angel to Joseph, and Joseph also proved to be a man of faith. God honors our faith!

FAMILY

MondayRead Genesis 1:27-28

"So God created man in His own image, in the image of God created He them. And God blessed them, and God said unto them, Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth." The fact that God chose to have His Son come into the world as a baby in a home underlines the tremendous importance of the home and family. Let us be reminded that God began the human race with a family, not a nation, not a religion, not a social or economic class of people, but a family. He could have had Jesus come into the world as a full grown man as He had created Adam and Eve. Jesus came to die as a human so God could issue an eternal pardon to all humanity since the blood of a sinless human paid the penalty. But God demonstrated the importance of home and family and the indescribable importance of parents. Imagine, all people, even the Son of God would be brought into the world and have parents and brothers and sisters and aunts and uncles. It is interesting also, that this would be a family who would experience hardships, even at the birth. Why would not the Son of God have a Divinely arranged smooth entrance into God's earth. Why the most difficult entrance imaginable? I mean miles to the delivery place, and then in a stable? I think God has revealed that life on a sin cursed earth is not easy, but, for people of faith, it is a victorious one. God knows and cares! God does not promise an easy life, but He has given us the gift of eternal life, thanks to Jesus!

WORSHIPERS

TuesdayRead Matthew 2:1-4

"Now when Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judaea in the days of Herod the king, behold, there came wise men from the east to Jerusalem, saying, Where is he that is born King of the Jews? For we have come to worship Him." Worship has always been in the plan of God, and God would make it a part of the Christmas story by including this intriguing account of the wise men from the far east coming to worship the new born king. There are many details that are worthy of note, but let us look at two: the importance of prophecy and the importance of witnessing. When the wise men showed up, it was in the capitol city of Jerusalem, where you would expect a new born king to be born. But that is not where Jesus was. Praise God that He provides truth before it happens, so we can be informed about the things God is planning for people. Those who knew the Scriptures were able to direct the wise men to Bethlehem because that is what God had the prophet Micah record many centuries before the birth of Christ. That leads to the other point. Why would these wise men from a country to the east have any knowledge or concern about a King of the Jews, a foreign country? It seems like the captivity of the Jews centuries before was used by God to have Daniel and his friends share their faith in that foreign country so others could be advised. That

became part of the thinking of the people there and was so effective that these men wanted to be witnesses and worshipers of the One who would be the Savior of the world. Did not the angel say that the news was for all people?

UNACCEPTABLE WORSHIP

Wednesday Read Matthew 15:1-9

"But in vain do they worship me, teaching for doctrine the commandments of men." The worship of the wise men was acceptable to God because they worshiped in spirit and in truth. But not all worship is acceptable to God. Remember that King Herod said he wanted to worship the new born king as well. In Matthew 2:8, we read these words of the king: *"Go, search diligently for the young child; and when ye have found him, bring me word again, that I may come and worship him also."* Well, God knew his heart, that his was only a pretense of worship, that his motives were different from true worship. Herod acted as though he wanted to come to worship, but it was for his own goals, certainly not to honor God. Jesus exposed false worship in today's Bible reading while he was talking to a group of people who engaged in worship more consistently than most others, but it was unacceptable worship. Why unacceptable? Their worship was not according to Biblical truth, but was contaminated by manmade doctrine. Cain made the same mistake back in Genesis 4. He came to worship God as did his brother, but God did not accept Cain's worship because it was not in harmony with the law of God. To worship properly, it must be in a God-honoring way according to His truth!

MESSENGERS

Thursday Read Luke 2:8-18

"And there were in the same country shepherds in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night. And, lo, the angel of the Lord came upon them, and the glory of the Lord shone round about them, and they were sore afraid. And the angel said unto them, Fear not, for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people." It is interesting that God chose shepherds to announce His birth. God wanted the message of a Savior to go to all the world. God could have used a variety of methods, not the least of which could have been a cloud formation across the sky or bolts of lightning formed in words to announce Jesus' birth. God controls all nature! God chose people, and not necessarily the most experienced orators in the world. He picked shepherds! What were there resumes in terms of qualifying them? This was a message from God that would change the course of history. This is arguably the most important news ever. God wanted the message to go to all people. The fact that He chose people to deliver His message certainly demonstrates the truth of I Corinthians 3:9: *"We are laborers together with God."* The shepherds did as assigned; they shared the news. But the shepherds are no longer here. We are, and God wants us to get the message of the Savior of the world to all people; Yes, the people we know! I hope we do as well as the shepherds did!

WORKERS

Friday Read John 6:27-28

"Labor not for the meat that perishes, but for the meat that endureth unto everlasting life, which the Son of man shall give unto you: for him hath God the Father sealed." I think those shepherds are a good example of this advice our Savior gave during His earthly ministry; that our primary occupation is to attend to the eternal business of the Most High God; building the Church by reaching souls for Christ. That is our full-time business. Now the shepherds did not retire as shepherds to be witnesses for Jesus. But it apparently became a passion. The Scriptures give only the initial account of their sharing what they had seen and heard, but I have to believe it was only the first of many more conversations for the rest of their lives. They continued to be shepherds to earn their living, but they also were ambassadors for Christ as they went about their temporal duties. Working for God while working for man is the eternal possibility for every day of our lives, by the conduct of our lives, particularly by the way we go about our working lives and by the testimony of our lips! He is worthy!

SOWERS

Saturday Read Matthew 13:18-23

"And he spoke many things unto them in parables, saying, Behold, a sower went forth to sow." Planting seeds is a job of all Christians. Why? To reap a harvest! Compare this responsibility to the physical world. To plant seeds, we have to have a place to plant them, and then we have to till the ground as a starting point in reaping a harvest. We then plant the seeds, and then we look to God to take over and do what He does to produce a harvest. Some seeds grow faster than others, and some may not bear fruit. Think of the joy of the harvest! The same is true in the spiritual world. The field is the world, and the seeds are the truths of the Bible. Planting seeds in the hearts of others may well reap a harvest of souls. Christians should be working together to get it done. Remember the plan Paul shared in I Corinthians 3:6: *"I have planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the increase."*