

GROWING IN FAITH



Rumors!

In the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent by God to a town in Galilee called Nazareth, to a virgin engaged to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David. The virgin's name was Mary. And he came to her and said, 'Greetings, favoured one! The Lord is with you.' But she was much perplexed by his words and pondered what sort of greeting this might be. The angel said to her, 'Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favour with God. And now, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you will name him Jesus. He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Most High, and the Lord God will give to him the throne of his ancestor David. He will reign over the house of Jacob for ever, and of his kingdom there will be no end.' Mary said to the angel, 'How can this be, since I am a virgin?' The angel said to her, 'The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore the child to be born will be holy; he will be called Son of God. And now, your relative Elizabeth in her old age has also conceived a son; and this is the sixth month for her who was said to be barren. For nothing will be impossible with God.' Then Mary said, 'Here am I, the servant of the Lord; let it be with me according to your word.' Then the angel departed from her.

-Luke 1:26-38

GOING DEEPER

In Isaiah 7:14 we read, "Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign. Look, the young woman is with child and shall bear a son, and shall name him Immanuel."

This was written almost 800 years before the birth of Christ. What kind of anticipation do you think this created within the people of Israel?

There are a few passages in Isaiah that pointed towards the birth of Christ...

What type of savior were the Israelites wanting?

What do you think the purpose was for sharing this news so long before the actual birth of Christ?

Imagine, today, an engaged young lady told that she was pregnant, not by her fiancé...

Even with an Angel of the Lord telling her not to be afraid, what emotions might she be having?

What if this was your daughter, or your son's betrothed?

Ultimately, Mary understands that she is going to be used by God, and this will be His son...

What feelings of anticipation would you have, knowing that God has chosen you to accomplish something so grand?

As we continue this journey in Advent ...

Who do you need to share God's love with?

What can you do to build anticipation of the coming birth of Christ?

GROWING IN FAITH



Birth!

In those days a decree went out from Emperor Augustus that all the world should be registered. This was the first registration and was taken while Quirinius was governor of Syria. All went to their own towns to be registered. Joseph also went from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to Judea, to the city of David called Bethlehem, because he was descended from the house and family of David. He went to be registered with Mary, to whom he was engaged and who was expecting a child. While they were there, the time came for her to deliver her child. And she gave birth to her firstborn son and wrapped him in bands of cloth, and laid him in a manger, because there was no place for them in the inn.

In that region there were shepherds living in the fields, keeping watch over their flock by night. Then an angel of the Lord stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. But the angel said to them, 'Do not be afraid; for see—I am bringing you good news of great joy for all the people: to you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, who is the Messiah, the Lord. This will be a sign for you: you will find a child wrapped in bands of cloth and lying in a manger.' And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host, praising God and saying,

'Glory to God in the highest heaven,
and on earth peace among those
whom he favours!'

-Luke 2:1-20

GOING DEEPER

As we read today's scripture, it is fascinating to see Isaiah's words fulfilled. Probably in an even more wonderful fashion than he could have ever imagined.

What feelings do you have when you hear this passage?

Shepherds were viewed as some of the lowest of the low...

Why do you think God used them?

How can we relate to the shepherds?

Part of the joy of this passage is that the rumors that had been going on for so long, came to fruition.

When something you had hoped/dreamed would happen, happens.

How does that make you feel? Why?

Who do you want to tell?

In last week's scripture Mary was told exactly who Jesus was going to be, in today's scripture the shepherds confirmed it.

How does it make you feel when something you believed to be true, is confirmed in a spectacular way?

As we continue this journey in Advent ...

With the joy and excitement we receive, who do we share with?

What can you do to continue to build anticipation for this wonderful life in Christ?

GROWING IN FAITH



Reality!

After eight days had passed, it was time to circumcise the child; and he was called Jesus, the name given by the angel before he was conceived in the womb. <VN>22</VN>

When the time came for their purification according to the law of Moses, they brought him up to Jerusalem to present him to the Lord (as it is written in the law of the Lord, 'Every firstborn male shall be designated as holy to the Lord'), and they offered a sacrifice according to what is stated in the law of the Lord, 'a pair of turtle-doves or two young pigeons.'

Now there was a man in Jerusalem whose name was Simeon; this man was righteous and devout, looking forward to the consolation of Israel, and the Holy Spirit rested on him. It had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not see death before he had seen the Lord's Messiah. Guided by the Spirit, Simeon came into the temple; and when the parents brought in the child Jesus, to do for him what was customary under the law, Simeon took him in his arms and praised God, saying,

'Master, now you are dismissing your servant in peace, according to your word; for my eyes have seen your salvation, which you have prepared in the presence of all peoples, a light for revelation to the Gentiles and for glory to your people Israel.'

-Luke 2:21-32

GOING DEEPER

As we read today's scripture, we can see that the law of the Lord was fulfilled.

Why is this significant? Would you expect anything less? Why?

As Simeon enters the narrative...

Why do you think the scripture lists the things that he is looking forward to?

What do you think about the part that the Holy Spirit plays in Simeon's life? What can we learn from that?

The importance of Jerusalem as well as the fulfillment of God's promise of salvation are both illustrated in this passage.

Knowing that the promise is fulfilled, how do you feel about it during this time of year?

Is God's salvation the ultimate gift? How do we live in such a way to honor that gift?

As we continue this journey in Advent ...

What can you do to share this gift with others?

How will you do things differently in the year to come in order to honor this incredible gift that we have been given?