



ADVENT & CHRISTMAS DEVOTION – WEEK 4

BY JILL DUFFIELD, PRESBYTERIAN OUTLOOK EDITOR

Mary goes to visit Elizabeth soon after Gabriel's trip to earth. Mary and Joseph go to be registered. The shepherds will go and see this thing the angels announce. The holy family travels to Jerusalem to present the baby at the temple. Eventually, they return to Nazareth. Jesus' ministry will take him on the road again and his disciples will leave everything to follow him. Movement. Journeys. Change. A life of faith requires an openness to *go* – where the Spirit leads, where God calls, where Jesus goes. A life of faith entails going at seemingly inopportune times to often unexpected places with an odd array of people. Are we ready to *go*?

Jesus upends our plans no less than Mary and Joseph's, the shepherds', Wise Men's and Peter's. Once he makes his entrance into our lives, our lives are no longer our own. This baby changes everything. Priorities shift. Plans change. Our whole sense of identity gets rearranged. Our love for Emmanuel expands our love for the world God so loves. Meeting Jesus transforms us. We must *go*: worship. We must *go*: tell others. We must *go*: serve. We must *go*: bring release to the captives. We must *go*: be light and salt and leaven. We must *go*: wherever Jesus goes.

As we gather for worship, sing familiar hymns, rejoice in the company of friends and family, we recognize that soon we will *go*. We will *go* into work places, schools, communities, families – and now that we've met Jesus, we do not *go* alone and we do not *go* for our sake alone, but with and for our Lord, Jesus Christ, the Messiah.

DAILY PRAYERS AND PRACTICES

Monday

SCRIPTURE READING: JOHN 1:1-14

Today remember that Jesus became flesh and dwelt among us. Jesus came into the world and in so doing has made us children of God. Today, wherever you go, go knowing you are a child of God and see others as children of God, too.

PRAYER FOR THE DAY:

God of heaven and earth, your love for us knows no bounds. Sending your Son to dwell among us, we glimpse the expansiveness of your grace, your yearning to be in relationship with us and the lengths to which you will go to reconcile us to you and to each other. We ponder all these things in our hearts and give you our deepest thanks and praise. Amen.

Tuesday

SCRIPTURE READING: ISAIAH 43:1-7

On this day after Christmas gather people together. Extend an invitation to those who may be struggling this holiday season. Go and let them know they are beloved and valued.

PRAYER FOR THE DAY:

Gathering God, you forget no one and seek out the lost. Thank you for making us your people, giving us purpose and knowing us. Envelop with your care those who yearn to know they matter. Place in our path those who fear they are forgotten. Make our homes places of refuge and joy. Amen.

Wednesday

SCRIPTURE READING: LUKE 2:1-20

Today read Luke's story of Jesus' birth and imagine yourself as the various characters in the narrative. Go in your imagination to the places the Spirit leads and spend time pondering in your heart what the incarnation means.

PRAYER FOR THE DAY:

Holy God, you speak through angels, you reveal your word to shepherds, you chose ordinary people to raise the Son of Man. Silence in us any voice but your own this day, so that we might ponder in our hearts what the coming of the Messiah means for us and for the world. Then send us to go and tell the world what we have witnessed. Amen.

Thursday

SCRIPTURE READING: PSALM 139:1-18

Today trust that there is nowhere that you can go that God is not with you. Before each meal or at each stop light or perhaps at the top of each hour, pause and be conscious of the reality that God is behind and before you, laying hands on you even now.



PRAYER FOR THE DAY:

Lord God, in all the busyness and distractions of daily living we forget that you are always with us. We give you thanks that there is no where we can go where you are absent. Make us aware of your hand upon us and grant us peace. Amen.

Friday

SCRIPTURE READING: MARK 1:16-20

Today consider the call of the first disciples. Jesus said, "Follow me." Immediately, they left their nets and went. What do you need to stop, drop or give up in order to go and follow Jesus?

PRAYER FOR THE DAY:

God who calls and transforms, just as Jesus turned Peter and James into fishers of people, use us to do your work and will. Grant us the courage to stop doing things as we have always done them and instead boldly follow Jesus to the new thing you are always doing. Amen.

Saturday

SCRIPTURE READING: ACTS 10:1-23

Today go to the people or places God sends you. Be open to dreams and visions that are strange or frightening. Are there people or places that make you uncomfortable? Perhaps God is sending you there.

PRAYER FOR THE DAY:

God of every tribe and nation, forgive us for refusing to go where you send us. Reveal to us those places or people to whom you wish to connect us. Help us to heed your Spirit so that we might be made brothers and sisters in Christ, a family, the eclectic, diverse, beautiful household of God. Amen.