

Harmony Presbyterian Church

Prayer for Weeks of December 22 - 28

The moment waited for by faithful people for millennia is almost here. The Advent period is wrapping up and the reality of Jesus' birth is fast approaching. A week with the Winter Solstice & lunar eclipse, a week when days start to get longer & brighter, a week full of story, hope, joy and hearts moved to giving, and a week that ends with Christmas Day. What a great time! We will pick up where we ended last week, with Luke's report of the events around the birth of Jesus and include Matthew too.

It is a rushed and stressful time for many, so *intentionally* take some time with God. Mark it on your calendar, program your phone to alert you, set a reminder - "take time right now with God." Don't look for slack time, it won't happen. Don't wait for any better invitation than God has already given you, take the time, make the time - and this will be the most blessed and fulfilling Christmas you have ever had.

NOEL HALLELUJAH MERRY CHRISTMAS HAPPY NEW YEAR

(For individual prayer requests, check www.HarmonyPres.com : go to "News" page and there you will find the "Prayer Requests" with the latest prayer needs & these listed on the bottom.)



Wednesday, December 22

Last week we concluded Tuesday's prayer scripture with Luke 2: ⁶While they were there, the time came for her to give birth. ⁷She gave birth to a son, her firstborn. She wrapped him in a blanket and laid him in a manger, because there was no room in the hostel.

Today: Luke 2: (The Message) ⁸⁻¹²There were shepherders camping in the neighborhood. They had set night watches over their sheep. Suddenly, God's angel stood among them and God's glory blazed around them. They were terrified. The angel said, "Don't be afraid. I'm here to announce a great and joyful event that is meant for everybody, worldwide: A Savior has just been born in David's town, a Savior who is Messiah and Master. This is what you're to look for: a baby wrapped in a blanket and lying in a manger."

What a blessing, Lord, to be like the shepherds, people who are committed to caring for the lost, weak and needy, and now become the first to hear and the first to proclaim the birth of the Savior. We understand their fear at Your angel appearing to them. The wonder of Your presence and the way You meet us is startling, scary and powerful to us, it is comforting to hear Your "Don't be afraid. We are afraid so often, Your words of assurance are needed by us. He is here, Jesus, our Savior, we have waited and prayed for Your help, but here You are - how awesome, how wonderful. You meet our needs and call us to go and see what You have done. O Father, we need Your help to actually

believe You for we have become cynical at anything good happening. We need You to push us and lead us so we do not miss out on all the loving things You do. Tell us more than once where to look and what to look for, it seems we are like school children with Attention Deficit Disorder and we zone out and miss out again. Our denial of Your presence actually does worry us, when we remember. Thank You for being so gracious with us. Amen.



Thursday, December 23

Luke 1: [\(The Message\)](#) ¹³⁻¹⁴ *At once the angel was joined by a huge angelic choir singing God's praises: "Glory to God in the heavenly heights, Peace to all men and women on earth who please him."*

We praise You, Lord, we sing to You our hallelujah's. All Your people have sung You songs of awe, praise, thanksgiving, joy, and worship. We join with the Angelic voices in welcoming Jesus to our world again. He is our Lord, yet as we remember the Nativity story, it is like we are transported there and celebrate again his birth. Welcome to our World! Glory to You, God, for You are good and we can trust You with all we love, even our very lives. We desire to proclaim Your peace, Your shalom, Your wholeness to every person that their lives can conform to Your standards and they can truly experience Peace that only comes by following You. As our lives become lives of faith, lives that trust You, lives that honor Your word and follow Your path, we find that in Christ, we are pleasing to You. Thank You for Your peace, thank You for Christmas, we sing Your praise. Amen.



Friday, December 24

Luke 1: [\(The Message\)](#) ¹⁵⁻¹⁸ *As the angel choir withdrew into heaven, the shepherders talked it over. "Let's get over to Bethlehem as fast as we can and see for ourselves what God has revealed to us." They left, running, and found Mary and Joseph, and the baby lying in the manger. Seeing was believing. They told everyone they met what the angels had said about this child. All who heard the shepherders were impressed.*

This nite, we travel to Bethlehem, we join the shepherds and we seek Your manger. Lead us Lord, that we can not only find You like a little babe, but in trust fall down and worship You. Lead us that we can follow You with joy and enthusiasm like those sheep herders, even running to greet You, running to serve You. We look at the evidence of Your presence with us: healings, transformed lives, love, hope, joy, righteousness and faithfulness and we affirm with the shepherds, seeing IS believing. Let our witness to what we know impress and move others to seek You also. Welcome to our world, O breath of heaven, little child of Bethlehem, holy infant child of Mary, Immanuel - God with us. Amen.



Saturday, December 25 Christmas Day

Luke 1: (The Message) ¹⁹⁻²⁰ *Mary kept all these things to herself, holding them dear, deep within herself. The shepherders returned and let loose, glorifying and praising God for everything they had heard and seen. It turned out exactly the way they'd been told!*

What a day, Lord, Oh, what a day! You have come - all the prophets words are true, You are trustworthy and have come to save us and give us a relationship with You and life eternal. You have chosen us to be like the Shepherds, and to cut loose, to proclaim You with vigor and joy. Let our lives not be cool about You, and about Your coming to us in the birth of Jesus in Bethlehem, but let us be authentically and deeply moved by You. He is the Son of God, the Redeemer, the Messiah & Christ, Jesus is our Savior. After all that we have lived through with You, we are almost worn out by joy and praise. Like Mary, we need a quiet time to relax and be with You, a time to make sense of all You have done. Let this Christmas day be a day of quiet joy and a day of rest. On this feast day, keep us from over-indulgence, that we can enjoy, but remember those who have so much less than us also. Hear our prayer for all Your children - rich and poor, healthy & sick, those in peace and those living under conditions of war. As we open presents reminding us of the presents Jesus received, we hold in our thoughts those who need even the basics of life to survive. This is a good start for a new year. Thank You for this Christmas day. Amen.



Sunday, December 26

Matthew 1 (the Message) ¹⁸⁻¹⁹ *The birth of Jesus took place like this. His mother, Mary, was engaged to be married to Joseph. Before they came to the marriage bed, Joseph discovered she was pregnant. (It was by the Holy Spirit, but he didn't know that.) Joseph, chagrined but noble, determined to take care of things quietly so Mary would not be disgraced.*

²⁰⁻²³ *While he was trying to figure a way out, he had a dream. God's angel spoke in the dream: "Joseph, son of David, don't hesitate to get married. Mary's pregnancy is Spirit-conceived. God's Holy Spirit has made her pregnant. She will bring a son to birth, and when she does, you, Joseph, will name him Jesus—'God saves'—because he will save his people from their sins." This would bring the prophet's embryonic sermon to full term:*

Watch for this—a virgin will get pregnant and bear a son; They will name him Immanuel (Hebrew for "God is with us").

²⁴⁻²⁵ *Then Joseph woke up. He did exactly what God's angel commanded in the dream: He married Mary. But he did not consummate the marriage until she had the baby. He named the baby Jesus.*

Great events, O God, have happened in our sight. We see and hear You, but sometimes we do not know how to make sense of it all. We need Your Holy Spirit to be able to Listen and not just hear & have vision instead of blind seeing. This wonderful story of Jesus' birth is an eternal smile to us, it is Your warm embrace of love, a hug of acceptance we gladly receive. You spoke to many bringing the story to fruition, and as wild as it seemed to them, You were truthful and helped them believe what so obviously happened in their midst - You came into this world and brought us salvation. You are awesome, wonderful,

fantastic. You came, named Jesus (in Hebrew) "God saves" and gave him the nick name of Immanuel, God with us. We can try to miss the point, but You have made it so obvious that only very slow or perversely determined can miss the intent of Christmas. Let our lives be as useful and important as those of Joseph and Mary. Thank You for coming for us. Amen.



Monday, December 27

Luke 2 (the Message) ²¹When the eighth day arrived, the day of circumcision, the child was named Jesus, the name given by the angel before he was conceived.

²²⁻²⁴Then when the days stipulated by Moses for purification were complete, they took him up to Jerusalem to offer him to God as commanded in God's Law: "Every male who opens the womb shall be a holy offering to God," and also to sacrifice the "pair of doves or two young pigeons" prescribed in God's Law.

²⁵⁻³²In Jerusalem at the time, there was a man, Simeon by name, a good man, a man who lived in the prayerful expectancy of help for Israel. And the Holy Spirit was on him. The Holy Spirit had shown him that he would see the Messiah of God before he died. Led by the Spirit, he entered the Temple. As the parents of the child Jesus brought him in to carry out the rituals of the Law, Simeon took him into his arms and blessed God:

God, you can now release your servant; release me in peace as you promised. With my own eyes I've seen your salvation; it's now out in the open for everyone to see: A God-revealing light to the non-Jewish nations, and of glory for your people Israel.

Our lives, Lord God, are lived in rituals that confirm who we are. We observe birthdays, holidays, baptisms and marriages as just some of our ritual events that mark our lives. Jesus was taken by his parents to be circumcised and named as part of the Jewish family ritual that observed the ancient circumcision covenant, that Jesus is a child of Abraham, that he is a member of Your chosen people. In rituals, we find we fit and are part of Your Body of Christ, the New Covenant in Jesus. To make sure we understand, You speak to us in many ways, speaking to us through Your people, old and Young who carry Your word, like Simeon who reminded the parents of Your work in and through them. Let us hear similar voices of faithful people so we can remember what our lives are about. We are called in Christ to meaningful lives that build Your kingdom. Amen.



Tuesday, December 28

Luke 2: (The Message) ³³⁻³⁵Jesus' father and mother were speechless with surprise at these words. Simeon went on to bless them, and said to Mary his mother,

This child marks both the failure and the recovery of many in Israel, A figure misunderstood and contradicted— the pain of a sword-thrust through You— But the rejection will force honesty, as God reveals who they really are.

³⁶⁻³⁸ *Anna the prophetess was also there, a daughter of Phanuel from the tribe of Asher. She was by now a very old woman. She had been married seven years and a widow for eighty-four. She never left the Temple area, worshiping night and day with her fastings and prayers. At the very time Simeon was praying, she showed up, broke into an anthem of praise to God, and talked about the child to all who were waiting expectantly for the freeing of Jerusalem.*

Just when we get You 'figured out', learn how to act and talk, and our lives are happily on auto-pilot, You again speak to us, and mess up our 'knowing it all'. We think we're perfect in our religion, have it all figured out and 'humbly' are paragons of Your work, so it is a shock, leaving us speechless, to remember that we are 'in process' with You, but not close to perfection yet. I thought this was all about me, about the Men of God, and then up steps a woman, Anna, and she speaks Your word with profound depth and ability. Like the angels, she sang to You praise and worship, and she told all who were close about Jesus and Your plans for His life. Startle us from our rigid beliefs based on human logic, free us from our religions and instead move us to faith in You. Make our faith a daily, moment by moment living with You, where You speak and we respond, and that conversation becomes where You give us our transforming vision. Talk to us in our prayer and meditation, and place within us our life meanings and purpose, a full calling, that we may live way beyond religion, and into Christian - living with Christ at the center of our lives. Thank You for this Christmas, it has been blessed! Amen.



(Next week we look in Matthew again to pick up the story with the Wise Men)

GENERAL PRAYER AREAS

Generic Prayer needs that will always be there, a list of categories or topics You can fill-in with Your prayers:

Pray For: Family, Relationship, Friends, Children, Parents, Divorce, Births, Deaths

For: Illness, healing, broken bones, broken spirits, emotional problems, depression, Rage, addictions, surgery's, cancer, suicidal thoughts, unknown emerging issues

For: Employment, harassment, promotion, challenges, opportunities, entrepreneurs, retirement, service, & businesses that they use Christ-like methods in all their actions,

For: workers that they are safe in the work place and especially for American workers that they can stay employed and produce good products; for the unemployed that their spirits are lifted up and they keep trying to find that job – open opportunities for all who want to work

For: Bills, stewardship, debts, loans, homes to live in, cars that work, for Banks and financial institutions, the Government's debt load, (& Harmony's debt load)

For: the world – for Racism & Slavery that is bigger than ever, the poor, medical needs, economic needs, development needs, moral and social needs,

For: people and nations on every continent and island area, for floods, earthquakes, typhoons & hurricanes, tornados, fires, avalanches & blizzards

For: The environment, prayer for all the critters that have no voice, from the seemingly least to the biggest, prayers for their environment, prayers for poachers, for those who pollute, for the clean-up of polluted areas, for wisdom & good intentions in Governments, environmental groups, citizens as well as industry & business.

For: Harmony & all churches, faithfulness, trust in God, belief in the word of God, for those who are not saved, for those who sit in church and don't yet know God, for unity in the Body of Christ. For other religions, especially those who consider us their enemy, prayer for peace, and God's Spirit to work

For Peace, for our enemies, for our Military, for Military families, for terrorist groups, for all who use violence and evil means to take away freedom and liberty,

For our Government, at all levels, that they look to God for leadership and vision, and have the courage to follow.

For our courts that they seek truth and practice justice in all their actions, always eschewing politics.

For our fellow citizens that they become active and involved in the political process and vote, that we exercise our Constitutional rights

For all the governments of the world, for an end to racism, despots & tyrants, rule by pitting groups against groups. An end of genocides, oppressions of minorities, withholding education or food or medicine from anyone.

For: Immigrants from lands with failed economies or governments, for patience and loving action by states and federal government, for safety for all people, for those who are refugees and those who have no home, for our debate about those here illegally.

For all who do not know Christ as their Lord and Savior, that they will hear the good news and respond in faith.

(Any more to add, anything we forgot? Let us know at RevKunter@aol.com, we'll add them in too.)

