



*There is no one holy like the LORD;
There is no one besides you;
There is no Rock like our God. —1 Samu-*

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All is Calm?

Joseph went up from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to Judea, to Bethlehem...He went there to register with Mary, who was pledged to be married to him and was expecting a child. Luke 2:4,5

Visualize Christmas today. It's often times hectic and stressful. Now try to imagine that first Christmas. We think of "O Little Town of Bethlehem, how *still* we see thee lie. Silent Night, Holy Night, All is *calm*, All is bright."

For Joseph and Mary, the world at that time was anything but still and calm.

Mary was a young, unmarried pregnant girl. She and Joseph had to travel approximately 60 miles on foot over rough terrain to a city buzzing with people all trying to register at the same time. The decree for the census came from Rome so it was not optional to ignore the decree.

Maybe they could have held off registering until after the baby was born. Maybe they wanted to leave their home town quickly—they must have been a source of gossip. The Bible doesn't tell us the reasons they chose to go to Bethlehem at such a late stage of the pregnancy; but whether they stayed home and waited, or left when they did, their personal lives were anything but still and calm.

When the moment their baby was brought into the world, there was no hospital or medical facility; there wasn't a comfortable room available in town. Their baby, God's Son, was born in a stable, wrapped in rags, and laid in a feeding trough. Delivering a baby in those circumstances couldn't have been calm and peaceful.

One thing the Bible does tell us is that when Mary is informed of the impending pregnancy she doesn't tell God, "Not me." She answers, "I

am the Lord's servant...May it be as you said." (Luke 1:38) Joseph, when first hearing of the pregnancy was going to get out of marrying her, he knew he wasn't the father; and he really wasn't obligated. But when the angel of the Lord told him to stay with Mary, he did what the Lord commanded.

Certainly Mary and Joseph had to feel more than a little uneasy about their circumstance of having to raise God's Son and raise him in the world they were living; but even before they traveled the road to Bethlehem they chose to be *trusting servants*. They had already found their peace.

We all have our difficult roads in life and face stress and uncertainty, but if we go forward as obedient, trusting servants we too will find peace in whatever the circumstance.

Have a Blessed Christmas—Renae



December

- 13 Chris Reimer
- 15 Curt Marcus
Justin Van Eps
Natalie Jurgenson
- 16 Edith Ahrenholz—92nd
- 24 Lois Kennard

January

- 1 Linda Kamstra
- 2 Mike Dahlseid
Alyssa Marcus
- 7 Linda Mikelson
Chris Lorensen
- 8 Jan Kleinhuizen

- 9 Katheleen Brower
Brenda Bergsma
- 11 Burton Ulferts
- 12 Henry Green
- 13 Isaiah Iedema
- 15 Duane Noordmans
- 18 Bob VandenEinde—80th
Tom Mikelson
- 22 Hailey Jurgenson
- 24 Makenna Brouwer
Shirley Jensen—89th
Jazmyn Lefever
- 28 Anna Marcus
Eleanor Ryder
- 31 Kathryn Mach



Anniversaries

December

- 9 Clinton and Linda Kamstra
- 10 Roger and Cindy Groen
- 19 Bob and Joanne Ver Steeg
- 22 Sam and Barb Modderman
- 28 Corey and Melanie Pavelko
- 30 Marv and Sandy Moorlag

2nd Sunday Offering

December 10

CCS
Salvation Army
Bethany Christian Services
Bible League

January 14

CMCS
World Renew-AIDS Relief
The Fortress
Calvin Seminary

Worship Events

Please join us for our **Christmas Eve Service** at 5:00 pm on December 24. We will be worshipping together with The Broken and Karen Churches—more information to follow

Communion

We will be having Communion on January 7
A Love Offering will be collected for the Benevolent Fund.

Cadets Update

On Wednesday night, November 30th Willmar Cadets Club from First Reformed Church, Willmar, MN and Rock of Life CRC in Willmar came to our Implement Store to get a tour and learn about small engines.

We are continuing to do badge work, Bible Study and fun learning activities outside our regular lessons.

Our last lesson of 2023 will be December 20 and will resume on January 3, 2024. Any boy in Grades 1-6 are welcome to join us.



2023 Thanksgiving Report

Ministry	Amount
Building Fund-\$500 to Loan Payment	3,005.00
World Renew	1,220.00
General Fund	1,070.00
Rev. Steve and Chris VanZanen	1,000.00
Resonate Global Missions	675.00
Kandiyohi County Food Shelf	662.00
United Campus Ministry	570.00
The Fortress	550.00
The Broken	500.00
Benevolent Fund	300.00
Salvation Army	300.00
Haiti Relief	200.00
Faith Promise	100.00
Bethany Christian Services	50.00
The Well	50.00
GEMS	50.00

Community Events

A Night of Worship

Willmar Assemblies of God is hosting a night of worship on December 15. Doors open at 7:00 pm.

The featured singers are Jason Gray and Joel Hanson with Scott Barney as emcee.

This event is sponsored by the One Way Festival and the free will donation will benefit The Fortress and ATLAS.

See the poster on the bulletin board for more details

Nachos Navidad for Hope

The Willmar MN location of Taco John's has generously offered to donate \$1 from each order of Nachos Navidad from now through December 23rd. See the poster on the bulletin board for more details.

Thoughts and Prayers



There has been a backlash in recent times against those who offer prayers during a tragedy. To some, the phrase has come to be an empty gesture, which acknowledges an issue but refuses to do anything about it. I'm sure that some of this is because of a growing atheistic mindset in our culture, but I also think some of it comes from the mistaken idea that prayer and action don't go hand in hand.

There is no greater example of someone who meshed prayer and action than that of Nehemiah. When he heard of the tragedy that had befallen his hometown, he prayed and looked for an opportunity to use his position to help. When he had been confronted by the king regarding his sadness, before he spoke of his request to the king, he prayed (Nehemiah 2:2-5). When threatened by the naysayers of his work, he "prayed to our God and...set up a guard" (Nehemiah 4:9). He did not act without praying and did not pray without acting.

What made Nehemiah a leader that accomplished so much was this fusion of prayer and action. He didn't see prayer as a "give up" gesture but rather one that put him in contact with the one that could solve any problem.

Just like in Nehemiah's day we are surrounded by the critics who throw doubts and fear, that undermine the faithful, and cast suspicion on God and his people. Like Nehemiah, we must also not be afraid to put our trust in God and our hand to the work. Our prayers need to be the source of power for our efforts, not our excuse to do nothing. —Barry Haynes, Pastor Hope Church, Hope Alabama

(<https://bulletindigest.com/2019/09/03/thoughts-and-prayers/>)



"Prayer is not asking. Prayer is putting oneself in the hands of God, at His disposition, and listening to His voice in the depth of our hearts."— Mother Teresa

"Do not pray for an easy life, pray for the strength to endure a difficult one"— Bruce Lee

"Prayer is not asking. It is a longing of the soul. It is daily admission of one's weakness. It is better in prayer to have a heart without words than words without a heart."— Mahatma Gandhi

"The function of prayer is not to influence God, but rather to change the nature of the one who prays."— Soren Kierkegaard

"The more you pray, the less you'll panic. The more you worship, the less you worry. You'll feel more patient and less pressured."— Rick Warren. The Purpose of Christmas

Remember in Prayer

Those who are unable to join us

Gloria Epema
Gerri Hillenbrand
Shirley Jensen
Martha Kiel
Margaret Negen
Jean Rolighed
Mae Ryks
Burton Ulferts
Bea Visser

Our Servicemen

Jacob Lefever
Joe Pavelko

Our College Students

Readan Bos-St. Benedict

Christmas is Costly

- It cost Joseph the embarrassment and rumors that his soon-to-be wife was pregnant with a child that was not his.
- It cost Mary her comfort to have her Son born in a stable and to lay him in a manger.
- It cost Mary and Joseph the benefits of home during a long period of exile in Egypt to protect the babe Jesus.
- It cost mothers in and around Bethlehem the massacre of their babies by the cruel order of Herod.
- It cost the shepherds the complacency of their shepherds' life, with the call to go to the manger and to tell the good news.
- It cost the wise men a long journey and expensive gifts and changed lives.
- It cost the early apostles and the early church persecution and sometimes death.
- It cost Paul, John, and Peter as well as other missionaries of Christ untold suffering and hardship to spread the good news.
- It cost Stephen and James and other Christian martyrs of all ages their lives for Christ's sake.
- More than all this, it cost God the Father His own Son—He sent Him to the earth to save men.
- It cost Jesus a life of sacrifice and service, a death cruel and unmatched in history.

So before we complain about how much Christmas costs us or any other thing cost us for that matter; think about how much it cost Christ Jesus to come to this world to

Ponderings at the end of a day — or year

Dutch Catholic priest and theologian Henri Nouwen found it useful to reflect on several questions at the end of the day: “Did I offer peace today? Did I bring a smile to someone’s face? Did I say words of healing?” Pondering such questions may prove valuable at the end of a year as well: “How did I contribute to peace in the world this past year? Did I bring smiles to others’ faces? Did I offer words of healing?” Nouwen continued, and we can too: “Did I let go of my anger and resentment? Did I forgive? Did I love?”

Many of us set New Year’s resolutions for self-improvement, asking, “What are my goals? How can I better myself, my weight, my work-life balance, my habits?” But Nouwen said of his self-inquiry: “These are the real questions. I must trust that the little bit of love that I sow now will bear many fruits, here in this world and [in] the life to come.” His resolution was to share God’s love with others. With God’s help, it can be ours as well, for each new day and each new year.



HAVE A VERY
Merry
CHRISTMAS

Rock of Life CRC Staff

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Proclaim

God's love and grace to His World

II Timothy 3:16&17

Values Statement

Loving

God above all, and our neighbors as ourselves

Praying

in all circumstances because God controls our ministry

Preaching

and teaching from God's Word, the Holy Bible

Giving

of our time, gifts and money which are blessings from God

Seeking

the Lord's will and direction in everything we do

Helping

others to find and follow Jesus.

Ephesians 4:1b-2

Vision Statement

Reaching Up

to God as we listen for His voice in our prayers of thanks,
confession and praise.

Reaching In

becoming more Christlike, clothed with
compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness,
patience and forgiveness

Reaching Out

Boldly through the power of the Holy Spirit, with words and deed,
in our Community and worldwide.

Colossians 3:12-14

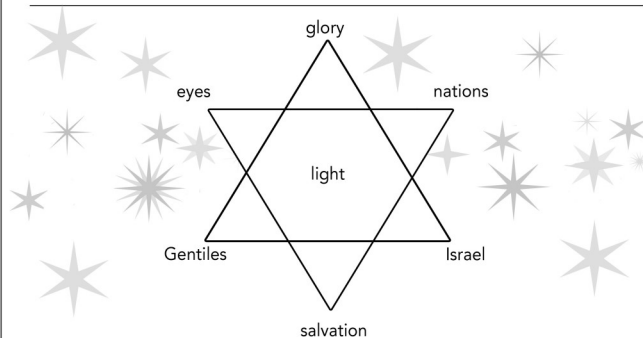
All to the Glory of God



SIMEON'S SIGHT

When Joseph and Mary brought baby Jesus to the temple,
they heard a special prophecy from Simeon.

*Directions: Using the star key, write the words in
the correct spaces to complete Luke 2:30-32, NIV.*

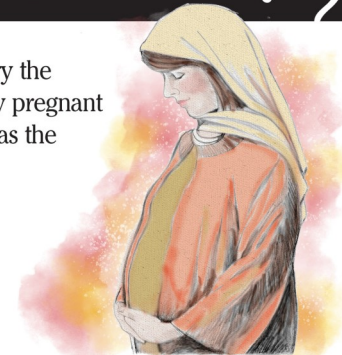


"For my _____ have seen your _____, which you have prepared

?? ? Bible Quiz ? ? ?

Elizabeth, an older relative of Mary the
mother of Jesus, was miraculously pregnant
at the same time as Mary. What was the
name of Elizabeth's husband?

- A. Aaron
- B. Zechariah
- C. Joseph
- D. Simeon



Answer: B (See Luke 1:5, 39-41.)

In Matthew's genealogy, which
woman is *not* mentioned as
Jesus' ancestor?

- A. Tamar
- B. Rahab
- C. Mary
- D. Ruth

