

# A CHRISTMAS LIKE NO OTHER

## WEEKLY STUDY

### Week Two

In the second week of Advent (a word which simply means “coming” or “arriving”), Pastor Gary Henderson shared about the longing for peace that we feel in this day and age. We have some things to learn from Joseph as he moved towards peace. If you are studying with your Providence Small Group, you can share from daily readings as well as the additional questions at the bottom of this guide. If you would like to get connected to a Providence Small Group visit [prov.church/signup](http://prov.church/signup) and click on Small Groups.

Find a time each day to read the passage of scripture. Follow the daily prayer prompt and then pray this prayer together:

*Prayer of Peace: God we look to the Prince of Peace especially in this time when peace seems so elusive. May we confront our fears, rest from our labors and trust God in this season of waiting. Come Lord Jesus! Amen.*

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### DAILY STUDY

MONDAY: MATTHEW 1.18-21

*This is how the birth of Jesus the Messiah came about: His mother Mary was pledged to be married to Joseph, but before they came together, she was found to be pregnant through the Holy Spirit.<sup>19</sup> Because Joseph her husband was faithful to the law, and yet did not want to expose her to public disgrace, he had in mind to divorce her quietly.*

*<sup>20</sup> But after he had considered this, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, “Joseph son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary home as your wife, because what is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit.<sup>21</sup> She will give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins.”*

- In Jesus’ day, if you were pledged to be married it was a binding agreement. You were in this for the long run. So for this arrangement to be upset by a scandalous pregnancy would be quite unsettling to say the least. Yet Joseph was a faithful man and sought the route of peace. What does the route of peace look like for you in this season of life?
- *Pray for vision to see the path of peace laid out in front of you.*

TUESDAY: MATTHEW 1.22-24

<sup>22</sup> All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had said through the prophet: <sup>23</sup> "The virgin will conceive and give birth to a son, and they will call him Immanuel" (which means "God with us").

<sup>24</sup> When Joseph woke up, he did what the angel of the Lord had commanded him and took Mary home as his wife.

- It's amazing how you can anticipate an outcome for years (or lifetimes) and yet when the time of fulfillment comes, it can blow you away. For Joseph, prophecies from centuries earlier were coming true in his humble life. Where have you seen the promises of "God with us" coming true in your life?
- *Pray for that today might be a time when God shows up in big ways.*

WEDNESDAY: LUKE 2.14

*"Glory to God in the highest heaven,  
and on earth peace to those on whom his favor rests."*

- This is the message that we hear a little later in the Christmas story. But as we are positioned between the first Christmas and the return of Jesus it is easy to imagine the sound of these words today. What happens in your heart when you hear the proclamation of the heavenly hosts?
- *Pray these words today: On earth, peace. On earth, peace. On earth, peace.*

THURSDAY: PROVERBS 3.5-6

<sup>5</sup> Trust in the LORD with all your heart,  
And lean not on your own understanding;  
<sup>6</sup> In all your ways acknowledge Him,  
And He shall direct your paths. (NKJV)

- Peace for Joseph could only come when he faced his fears and moved forward. The road ahead for him was unknown and frightening, but somehow in his heart he must have heard these words from Proverbs. Acknowledge God over your fears and God will direct your steps towards peace.
- *Make your prayers today a constant acknowledgement of God, and pray for discernment for the path ahead.*

FRIDAY: ISAIAH 33.2-6

<sup>2</sup> Lord, have mercy on us. We have put our hope in you. Protect us day by day and save us in times of trouble. <sup>3</sup>When you fight for us, nations run away from the noise of battle. <sup>4</sup>Their belongings are pounced upon and taken as loot.

<sup>5</sup> How great the Lord is! He rules over everything. He will fill Jerusalem with justice and integrity <sup>6</sup> and give stability to the nation.

- We repeat the refrain Kyrie Eleison (Lord have mercy!) on a regular basis. Sometimes we say it without even intending to address God. Our peace comes from God's mercy. God's mercy is revealed through sacrifice and struggle as God steps in for us. Who needs to experience God's mercy today? How can you encourage them to put their hope in Jesus?
- *Pray the words, "Lord have mercy" each time you encounter a struggle today.*

SATURDAY: JOHN 14.26-27

*"...the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you. <sup>27</sup> Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid."*

- At his birth, Jesus brought peace into a troubled world. In the days before Easter Sunday, Jesus promised that his peace would remain after his death and resurrection. The Holy Spirit reminds us of the Way of Christ which is peace. What is the role of the Holy Spirit in bringing calm and focus to your life?
- *Pray for the Holy Spirit to continue to teach and remind you of the peace we have in Jesus.*

## SMALL GROUP DISCUSSION

- Pastor Gary shared from two translations of the birth narrative from Matthew 1.18-24. The NIV translation is in Monday's reading. Compare it to the Cotton Patch Gospel shared below. How can language reflect the incarnation (God-put-flesh-on)? How does the Bible come alive in different ways at different times in your life?

The beginning of Jesus the Leader was like this: While his mama, Mary, was engaged to Joseph, but before they had relations, she was made pregnant by the Holy Spirit. Since Joseph, her fiancé, was a considerate man and didn't want to make a public scandal, he decided to quietly break up with her. As he was wondering about the whole situation, a messenger from the Lord came to him in a dream and said, "Joe Davidson, don't be ashamed to marry Mary, because the Holy Spirit has made her pregnant. Now she'll give birth to a boy, who you'll name Jesus, because he will deliver his nation from their errors."

22. This whole event was the completion of what the Lord had said through the prophet: "Listen, a young lady will get pregnant and give birth to a boy, and they'll name him 'God-is-with-us.' "

24. Then Joseph woke up and did as the Lord's messenger had directed—he married the girl. But he didn't sleep with her until she had her baby. And he did name it Jesus. --Cotton Patch Gospel

- Pastor Gary pointed out that Joseph had to rest and trust in God in order to find peace. What does it mean for you to rest today? What does it mean for you to trust in God right now?