



“Dreaming of Peace and Light”

Theme: Advent – Peace by Piece

Scriptures: Psalm 126 and Luke 1:46b-55

Weekly Memory Verse: ⁴⁹ *For the Mighty One is holy, and God has done great things for me.*

–Luke 1:49

Family Activity for the Week: This week, your family activity is simply to sign up for a Christmas box (if you haven’t already done so) and pick it up from the Church! Sign up here:

<https://www.summitdurango.org/christmas-at-summit/> Pick up times are December 15-17 from 5-7pm.

These boxes will get you into the Christmas spirit and connect all of the Summit Church family during this year of physically distancing. Don’t miss out!

Monday, December 14 – Read Psalm 126 – The Old Testament word for peace meant much more than just a temporary truce, a time when life was not marred by open conflict. As the New Bible Dictionary put it, and as we have learned during this sermon series on peace, the Old Testament word for peace, shalom, means, “completeness, soundness, well-being and salvation.”

- ▲ Like the Hebrews, we use the word “peace” to describe many states of well-being. It can mean freedom from fear or danger; inner tranquility with ourselves, others and God; quiet and rest; or confidence that the course we are following is right. What kind of peace do you treasure most right now? What role has Jesus played in helping you to find that peace?
- ▲ This psalm helped to counter the idea, common to people then and now, that “righteousness” involved heavy doses of condemnation and guilt. In what ways have “righteousness” and “peace” worked together in your spiritual journey? How do these two divine gifts strengthen and reinforce each other? What kind of peace do you dream of these days? Take those dreams to God in prayer today.

Prayer: *Lord God, your presence is leading me into a life of “completeness, soundness, well-being,” of shalom. As your voice speaks peace to me, may my heart sing of gratitude and love to you. Amen.*

Tuesday, December 15 – Read Luke 1:26-33 – God’s supreme act to speak peace to the earth was to be born as a baby named Jesus (the Greek form of the Hebrew Joshua, which meant “God saves.”)

- ▲ When you read or hear about God’s incredible love for you, are you able to take in this “good news”? What has been your experience of love and trust in close relationships? What helps you trust that God’s love is real through all the ups and downs of your life?
- ▲ Gabriel said to Mary, “The Lord God will give him the throne of David his father. He will rule over Jacob’s house forever, and there will be no end to his kingdom.” That could only apply to the long-
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awaited Savior, God's Messiah (see 2 Samuel 7:12-16, Isaiah 9:6-7)! The angel also said, "Rejoice, favored one! The Lord is with you!" How can you nurture a sense of God's continual, loving presence with you? How is your story connecting with the story of Jesus?

Prayer: *Lord Jesus, you were born much as I was—into a family, into a town—yet you are God! Keep increasing my capacity to love and be loved, to live my life the way you did. Amen.*

Wednesday, December 16 – Read Luke 1:34-38. Mary asked, "How will this happen?" Unlike his response to Zechariah (see Luke 1:19-20), Gabriel explained, saying: "The Holy Spirit will come over you and the power of the Most High will overshadow you ..." Then he added that Mary's relative, Elizabeth, "labeled 'unable to conceive' is now 6 months pregnant," and said, "Nothing is impossible for God." Mary's trusting response? "I am the Lord's servant. Let it be with me just as you have said."

▲ God's call to Mary was unique in all of history, just as the person of Jesus was. But God, through our gifts, talents and circumstances, calls each one of us to fill a particular place in the divine mission of redemption. How do you respond when you sense a divine "nudge" in your heart, when a path of service opens before you? What does it take for you to respond, as Mary did, "Let it be with me as you have said"?

▲ Scholar James Denney wrote, "Jesus came from God, all the Apostles declare, in a sense in which no other came. Does it not follow that, as two of our evangelists declare, He came in a way in which no other came?" Do you have questions about the "how" of the incarnation—how Jesus could be born to Mary fully human and fully divine, as Christian faith believes? It's okay to wrestle with the Bible while continuing to walk in all of God's light you do understand.

Prayer: *Lord God, from darkness to light, from illness (physical or spiritual) to health, from death to life—you are always the God for whom nothing is impossible. I praise you for the possibilities you've opened for me. Amen.*

Thursday, December 17 – Read Luke 1:39-40 and Matthew 1:18-23. An angel reassured Joseph and named the baby. Mary's pregnancy altered her fiancé Joseph's life as well as her own. "Because he didn't want to humiliate her, [Joseph] decided to call off their engagement quietly." But in God's great timing, "as he was thinking about this, an angel from the Lord appeared to him in a dream ..." explained Mary's pregnancy and repeated that the baby's name would be Jesus ("God saves"). The child would fulfill Isaiah 7:14's words about a sign that meant Emmanuel, "God with us."

▲ The gospels don't tell us much about Joseph. But Matthew, with just a few words, showed us something important even before Joseph had his dream about the angel: "Joseph her husband was a righteous man ... he didn't want to humiliate her." When have you been humiliated? How do you deal with feelings of shame? In the book *Safe People*, Cloud and Townsend list Biblically based qualities of "safe people." How safe are you in your relationships? Like Joseph, do you choose not to humiliate others?

▲ Christianity's central claim is that Jesus was not just a great and noble teacher. He was God—Emmanuel, God with us. How does this claim shape your faith and your life? How can you honor the Bible's claim that Jesus is God in ways that follow his example, extending love and grace even to people with different world views than yours, rather than condemning or mocking them?

Prayer: *Lord Jesus, in Joseph's story (as in your own life) you painted a very different picture from our human ones of what it means to be "a real man." Help me to reinforce that in myself, or in the men in my life. Amen.*

Friday, December 18 – Read Luke 1:46-50. We often call Luke 1:46-56, "The Magnificat," as *Magnificat* is the first word of Mary's song in the Latin Bible. Tradition said Mary sang these words, making them an early

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Christmas carol. The first part of Mary's song was full of pure joy, excitement, anticipation, and hope. Mary would bear a son—God's Son Jesus—and had found encouragement and confirmation from her relative Elizabeth. This was her praise-filled response.

▲ Mary's song was full of allusions to Old Testament promises that God would one day deliver Israel from oppressors, which would be Romans in her day. Mary not only celebrated that she would be a mother, but that through her Son God would deliver on his promise to defeat all that is oppressive and evil in the world. On which promises do you rely to keep your faith strong? In areas where your faith is less strong, consider searching the Scriptures for promises of what God wants to do and be in your whole life.

▲ In verse 46 Mary said, "With all my heart I glorify the Lord." Mary began her song with words of gratitude and thankfulness. As we enter this season when we celebrate the birth of God's Son, Jesus Christ, who or what in your life are you thankful for? What aspect of your life leads you to glorify the Lord with all your heart?

Prayer: *Lord Jesus, when Mary grasped that you would be her child, she celebrated with gratitude and thankfulness. Help us to celebrate you this Advent season, to glorify you with all our hearts. Amen.*

Saturday, December 12 – Read Luke 1:51-55. Mary also rejoiced that her child would fulfill God's promise to bring justice to an unjust world. In Jesus, God would care for the lowly, hungry and oppressed. The coming of the eternal king sent by God would turn upside-down many of the human values that had always tended to rule the world.

▲ Many stop at the opening line of the Magnificat and fail to realize how subversive, even revolutionary, Mary's song really was. Mary's words should make us uncomfortable. They point to a concern God has for the poor, and a sense that the rich have received theirs already. Since the income of the average American puts us in the top five percent in per-capita income in the world, most of us are "rich." We have the obligation and calling to be used by God to, "fill the hungry with good things." In what ways are you rich? In what ways "lowly"? How good are you at accepting help in your "lowly" areas? How willing are you to use your God-given ability to lift the burdens of those who are lowly in areas where, by God's grace, you are strong?

Prayer: *Lord Jesus Christ, I choose you to be king in my life. I gladly take up the freedom and challenge of living as a citizen of your kingdom, even if it means I'll have to wrestle to live by your values, which are so different from ours. Amen.*