

(For Monday, December 19, 2016) **How will you let Christmas lead you?**

"...And a little child shall lead them." (Is.11:6 - RSV)

The Bible sets forth prophecies and events which have taken place among specific people at select moments in history. But there is also a timeless quality of Scripture that has much more to do with our here-and-now. The "little child" of Isaiah's Holy Mountain is certainly the Christ Child who was born in a stable near Bethlehem some twenty centuries ago. But he is also every child who has ever been born on the planet. And we will only become God's people when we finally learn to be led by the needs of those who are the most vulnerable in our midst. No child ever came into this world deserving to be hungry, or cold, or living in the midst of violence and misery. And when we finally become a people who look first to the needs of the least among us, when we are finally willing to be led in childlike faith and innocence, then we will truly become God's children.

How will you let the Little Child of God lead you this Christmas?

(For Tuesday, December 20, 2016) **Are you ready for the *full* Christmas miracle?**

"And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "Now the dwelling of God is with men, and he will live with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God." (Rev.21:3 – NIV)

It's easy to forget the full measure of Christmas. God had planned the birth of Christ since before time began. The Resurrection of Jesus and the defeat of Satan is promised as early as Genesis 3:15, in what many theologians call the "Protoevangel." But the birth of Jesus is also a seal for God's promise to us that extends infinitely into our future. Just as the coming of the Holy Spirit is the first fruits of our heavenly citizenry, a kind of "green card" which secures our place in the Kingdom of Heaven (See Eph.1:14), so the birth of The Christ is earthly proof of the existence of heaven itself. He comes to dwell among us, just as one day we will go to be with Him forever.

This year, how can you fully celebrate the joy and the promise of Christmas?

(For Wednesday, December 21, 2016) **Did you know heaven lives within you?**

"And he came to her and said, "Greetings, O favored one, the Lord is with you!" (Lk.1:28 – ESV)

When Gabriel tells Mary that "the Lord is with you," Luke records this statement with the Greek proposition "*meta*." And this word often means "with" when used in the Bible. But *meta* can also mean "to be in company," "to be among," "to be present for aid," and sometimes it even means "to be after," or "to be behind." Mary was troubled at this annunciation as well she might be! What could this awesome Angelic messenger mean, that the Lord was part of her? A clergyperson I admire so very much once said that the difference between the Old Testament Saints and those of the New Testament is that for us who live with the Resurrected Christ, God is no longer simply *with* his people. Now He is *in* his people. You and I are highly favored because, just like Mother Mary, with the Christmas miracle we all have The Lord dwelling in each of us.

The question is, how do we reveal His presence in us to others?

(For Thursday, December 22, 2016) How does God reveal himself in your life?

"Restore us, O God; let thy face shine, that we may be saved!" (Ps.80:3,7,19)

Frequently in Psalms the Old Testament and the New coalesce. God's face shining down on his children as an immeasurable blessing is nearly as old as the history of Israel itself. (See Num.6:24-26) For the faithful Jew, the smiling countenance of God was a blessing of unimaginable scope. But when, inspired by the Holy Spirit Asaph wrote Psalm 80, he could not have known that he was also expressing an emotion to be felt by many Christians thousands of years in the future. Because with the Christmas miracle, you and I now live in a world where the face of God has truly been revealed in the form of his most precious Son, Our Lord Jesus. In ways too wondrous to count, the face of The Christ continues to bless his people in our here-and-now. And the face of Love's Lord is abroad in our world, if we will only take the time to look for Him.

How has the face of Jesus appeared to you recently?

(For Friday, December 23, 2016) Do you realize that Christ is born?

"The one who testifies to these things says, "Surely I am coming soon." Amen. Come, Lord Jesus!"
[Rev.22:20 - RSV]

Scripture finishes with a promise of The Lord's eminent return. After more than 2,000 years we have still not encountered him in human appearance, yet the promise is unequivocal. How can this be? Perhaps the answer is that He *has* already come. Those who focus on foretelling or anticipating the Second Coming remind me a little of the beginning of *Acts*, when the Disciples stand transfixed where The Lord has just ascended. So God sends 2 Angels who say, "Men of Galilee, why do you stand there looking into heaven?" (See Acts1:11a) Effectively, God is saying "Why are you just standing there? Get on with it!" So much of the Gospel is related in the present tense due to the timelessness of God's presence among us. (i.e. Christ is risen, The Lord Reigns, Jesus is Lord) So we say, "Christ is born" this week, because He is indeed come to be among His people.

How are you going to welcome anew the coming of The Lord this Christmas?