

11/30/25
1st Sunday in Advent
For Group Meetings from November 23rd – November 29th

OUR MISSION: As a missional congregation we *celebrate* Christ's presence, *invite* people into a growing relationship with Jesus, and *equip* them to *serve* in a broken world.

Prayer of the Day: God of every place and every moment, you work through the movements of history and the ordinary decisions of rulers and people. Teach us to trust that you are present in the mundane details of our lives and guiding us even when the path feels imposed or uncertain. Give us faith to follow where you lead, patience to walk the journeys we did not choose, and hope that your saving purposes are always at work in the world. Through Jesus Christ, the One who enters our ordinary days with extraordinary grace. **Amen.**

BIBLICAL EQUIPPING TOGETHER

Share: How did last week's scripture (Luke 23:33-43) work in your life this week?

Mission:

- What was most satisfying about your ministry last week?
- Where do you see God at work?
- How did you participate in God's missional activity?
- How did inviting go last Sunday?

Hear: Luke 2:1-3

Explore Questions: (Use these or develop your own.)

1. What historical details does Luke provide in these verses?
2. What is the purpose of the census mentioned in these verses?
3. What can we infer about Joseph and Mary from the fact that they obeyed the decree and traveled to Bethlehem despite the difficulty?

Connect Questions: (Use these or develop your own.)

1. When or where in your life have you experienced disruption recently?
2. When have you experienced God present in the "ordinary" moments of your life?
3. What helps you cultivate patience as you wait for whatever God has in store for you?

Memorize this verse: "In those days a decree went out from Caesar Augustus that all the world should be registered." (Luke 2:1) What helps you deal with moments in your life that are out of your control?

BIBLICAL EQUIPPING APART:

Obey: During this week follow through on your intentions.

Meditate: Meditate on Psalm 122. How does this speak into your life?

Reflect: What have I learned in my week of living with this text? What can I share with my group when we next meet?

Notes for ChristCare leaders:

It's sometimes easy for us to forget that the four gospel writers were artists. We get so caught up at times thinking of them as divine recorders, or agents of God's will, or even holy dictation takers, that we forget that they were first and foremost faithful artists. Writing (at least writing well) is an art. Words and imagination are the writer's materials, and grammar, syntax, and style the tools. And the gospel writers bent their skills toward the task of shaping and sharing the faith. Luke was no exception. In fact, he was a master craftsman. Take this passage, for instance, a clear transition to a major part of his account. After setting the stage with stories of the conception and birth of John, and of Gabriel's visit to Mary and Mary's visit to Elizabeth, Luke now moves to another and critical stage of the drama, the birth of Jesus.

And so just as he rooted John's conception and birth in the history of the region – "In the days of King Herod of Judea..." – so now he places with care the birth of Jesus among the events of the world powers. "In those days a decree went out from the Emperor..." One could look at this reference as Luke's attempt to give us clues about the date of Jesus' birth, or as an effort to establish the historical validity of his account. But I actually think Luke was playing for bigger stakes. I think Luke intended through this careful and stylized introduction, itself written something like a royal decree, to make two confessions.

The events he is about to narrate have world significance. Although none of the powers that be will give them any attention, Mary and Joseph's trek to Bethlehem and Jesus' birth in a stable will forever change the world. Why? Because God is getting involved once more and most intimately in history. Their history – Mary and Joseph's, and Quirinius and Augustus' history. And our history. God is coming in the person of Jesus, the helpless babe born in Bethlehem, to be joined to us – our ups and downs, triumphs and tragedies, hopes and fears – once and for all and forever. And so, Luke starts this most tender of scenes in the Bible with an artist's rhetorical flair and a first-century historian's instructive intent to make two confessions that might just as easily have been conveyed in three simple words: "Look out, World."

Thanks be to God,

Pastor Thadd (tbook@desertcross.org)

Traditional version:

Our Father who art in heaven,
hallowed be thy name; thy kingdom come,
thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread.
And forgive us our trespasses,
As we forgive those who trespass against us.
And lead us not into temptation; but deliver us
from evil. For thine is the kingdom, the power,
And the glory, forever and ever. Amen

Contemporary version:

Our Father in heaven,
hallowed be your name, your kingdom come,
your will be done on earth as in heaven.
Give us today our daily bread.
Forgive us our sins as we forgive those
Who sin against us. Save us from the time of trial
And deliver us from evil. For the kingdom, the
power, and the glory are yours,
Now and forever. Amen