

Devotions – December 17-23, 2017

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Sunday, December 17, 2017

Each Child Has a Name

Text: John 10:14

I am the Good Shepherd. I know my sheep, as the Father knows me. And my sheep know me.

The Shepherd knows his sheep. He calls each of them by name.

When we see a crowd, we see exactly that - a crowd. We see people, not persons, but people...a herd of humans...a flock of faces...that's what we see.

But not so with our Good Shepherd. To him, every face is different. Behind every face is a story. Every face is a child. Every child has a name.

Our Shepherd knows each of his sheep. He knows every story. He knows your name...and he will never forget it.

Let us pray: *Dear Shepherd, you know my name and my story. I know I am special to you. I feel loved and valued and remembered. Help me to tell others what you mean to me and that you want to be the Shepherd of all. Amen.*



Monday, December 18, 2017

God Sent Himself

Text: John 1:14

“The Word became flesh and dwelt among us...”

Don't you love the word “with”? Will you go with me...to the store...to the hospital...through my life? God says he will! “I am with you always,” Jesus said before he ascended to heaven, “to the end of the very age.” Search for restrictions to this promise; you'll find none. You won't find “I'll be with you if you behave...when you have more faith...when you believe...” No, there is none of that. There is no withholding tax on God's “with” promise. He is simply and always with us.

Immanuel – God with us. Prophets weren't enough; apostles wouldn't do; angels wouldn't do the trick. God sent more than miracles and messages. He sent himself; he sent his Son. "The Word became flesh and dwelt among us."

Let us pray: *Dear God-with-us, you have not forgotten your faithful promise to us. Thank you for such love. Help me to show your love to others. Amen.*

Tuesday, December 19, 2017



God's Love

Text: I John 4:16b

God is love.

Have you figured out the surprise of God's love? It has absolutely nothing to do with you. Others love you because...of your smile...of your wit...of your many talents. Some people actually love you because of you. But not God. He loves you because he is he. He loves you because he decides to do that. It is self-generated, uncaused and spontaneous. His love depends upon his choice to give it. The Lord did not set his affection on you and choose you because you stood out; it was because the Lord loves you.

You did not influence God's love. You cannot impact the tree-ness of a tree, the sky-ness of the sky, or the rock-ness of a rock. Nor can you effect the love of God for you. He loves you. Period; end of discussion!

Let us pray: *Dear Loving God, what wondrous love you have for me! Thank you. I will speak to others about you and your boundless love. Amen.*



Wednesday, December 20, 2017

The Treatment for Insignificance

Text: Matthew 1:23

They shall call his name "Immanuel", which means "God with us."

God's treatment for insignificance will not lead you to a bar or a social club. God's ultimate cure for the common life takes you to a manger... "The Babe of Bethlehem"... Immanuel. Remember the promise of the angel? "Behold, the virgin shall be with child, and bear a Son, and they shall call His name 'Immanuel', which is translated 'God with us.'"

Immanuel. The name appears in the same Hebrew form as it did two thousand years ago. “Immanu” means “with us.” “El” refers to Elohim, God. This is not an “above us God” or a “somewhere in the neighborhood God.” He came as the “with us God.”

Notice that it does not say “God with the rich” or “God with the righteous,” but God with us. All of us...Latvians, Irish, truck drivers, mail carriers. God with us.

Let us pray: *Lord God, you sent your only Son for me. You have made me special; you love me. Thank you. Amen.*



Thursday, December 21, 2017

Great Love

Text: Philippians 2:7

He gave up his place with God and made himself nothing.

Holiday travel has never been easy. Then, why do we do it? Why cram suitcases, deal with weather problems, endure endless airport waits? You and I know the answer: we love to be with the ones we love.

The four-year-old running up the sidewalk into the arms of Grandpa...that cup of coffee with Mom before the rest of the house awakens...that moment when, for just a moment or two, everyone is quiet as we hold hands around the table, thanking God for family and friends and pumpkin pie. We love to be with the ones we love.

May I remind you? So does God. He loves to be with the ones he loves. How else do you explain what he did? Between him and us there was vast distance – a great span. He couldn’t bear it; he couldn’t stand it. So he did something about it. He gave up his place with God and made himself nothing, taking human “likeness.”

Let us pray: *Dear God-with-us, thank you for such great love to come to earth to be with us...to be with me. Amen.*



Friday, December 22, 2017

Christmas Every Day

Text: Psalm 9:11

Sing praises to the Lord...tell the nations what He has done.

You have Christmas every day! Your gift bears not toys, books or sweaters, but God himself!

His work on the cross and in the resurrection for you, for me. Because of that, your sin and mine brings no guilt, and the grave brings no fear.

His energy: it's not up to you or me. We can do all things through Christ, who gives us every needed strength.

His love: what (or who) can separate you and me from it? Nothing.

Who could imagine such gifts? Who could imagine not opening them?

Let us pray: *Thank you, Lord, for giving us yourself. Amen.*



Saturday, December 23, 2017

He is Named Jesus

Text: Matthew 1:24-25

Joseph...took to him his wife, and did not know her until she had brought forth her first-born Son. And he called his name 'Jesus'.

Joseph tanked his reputation. He traded his probably promising career for a pregnant fiancé and an illegitimate son. He made the big decision of discipleship: he placed God's plan ahead of his own.

Rather than make a name for himself, he made a home for Jesus. And because he did, a great reward came his way: "he called his name Jesus".

Millions and millions have spoken the name of Jesus, and look at the person at the front of the line: Joseph. Of all the saints, sinners, prodigals, and preachers who have spoken the name, Joseph – a blue-collar small-town construction worker – said it first. Just think of it: he cradled the wrinkle-faced Prince of Heaven and with an audience of angels and sheep, whispered, "Jesus... You will be called Jesus."

Let us pray: *With Joseph and the whole host of believers, we call your name, Jesus – Wonderful Counselor, the Mighty God, the Everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace. Amen.*

