

November 23rd – Tuesday

Centering Breath Prayer: Child of peace...bring me into your presence.

Opening Prayer:

I praise you, O Lord, and welcome you into my home. I pray that you will make me welcome in your presence and journey with me through this coming day. It makes me glad to spend time in your glorious company and I greet you with joyful praise and even with singing. I do not know what this day may bring, but secure in the knowledge that you are with me, I can face anything. As we walk along the way today, remind me often that you are here and that your love is all that I need. In your praiseworthy name, I pray. Amen.

Scripture: Psalm 100

Key Verses: Psalm 100:1-2: (1) “Make a joyful noise to the Lord, all the earth. (2) Worship the Lord with gladness; come into his presence with singing” (NRSV).

Immanuel, God with us. It is a bold statement God made when Jesus was sent to live with us, to walk along side us and to gather us into God’s presence through this awesome gift. This journey of love we are making through this holiday season is not something which is unique to this moment. God is always with us, not just during the Advent/Christmas season, but in every moment of every day, now and always! Wow! What an incredible God we have, who chooses to travel with us in love at all times! It is definitely something worthy of praise, honor, glory, worship and singing. How sad that we so often take this incredible gift for granted and rarely turn to the Lord in praise, worship or even acknowledgement that God is even around. As we prepare for Thanksgiving, do we even think much about the reason the holiday was created in the first place? We prepare the house, the food, the table, the food, the TV room and did I mention the food? Do we prepare to give thanks? Do we even remember that God is with us as we prepare for the day? Even if we do not live in the US and have a holiday called Thanksgiving this week, do we remember that God is with us in our daily schedules? Do we praise God with joyful noise, worship with gladness and enter God’s presence with singing, in our hearts if not with our voices? The journey of love we have just begun will only be significant if we remember that the journey is not being made alone. It is being made with Immanuel, God with us, our Lord and our Savior and our friend who has chosen us to be God’s companions on the journey.

Think about the many tasks that make up our days, not just during this hectic season, but all through the year. Doesn’t it make sense to take time to welcome the Lord who walks with us and sustains us with love along the way. Life’s journey is not always an easy one, full of light and laughter. Sometimes it is full of pain, suffering and hardship. But we are not left alone to muddle through without hope or value. We have a constant companion who loves us more than we could ever deserve and who holds us by the hand to steady us and guide us as we go. Sometimes we are held in a close embrace of comfort and at others at the end of arms outstretched in joyous abandon. Our scripture passage today is a familiar Psalm of joy and thanksgiving for the God of

love who sustains us with steadfast love which endures forever and an acknowledgement of the faithfulness we find in our God. This journey of love we are taking through this holiday season gives us a glimpse of the greater journey of love that lasts for eternity. So often we talk about eternal life and our gaze is far in the future, to a time after death when everything will be perfect and wonderful and there will be no pain or suffering or death or separation for loved ones, etc. That's a lovely thing to contemplate. But we live in the here and now and that is also part of eternity. God's love is not just for a time in the future. It is also for today and tomorrow and for every day as well. That's what Immanuel came to proclaim, God with us here, today, in this world and not just somewhere in the future by and by. So let's *"Make a joyful noise to the Lord, all the earth. Worship the Lord with gladness; come into his presence with singing."* Let's welcome Immanuel into our daily lives with thanksgiving and joyful abandonment. Let's walk the journey of love with the Lord who is good, *"whose steadfast love endures forever and (his) faithfulness to all generations."*

Additional Scriptures: Psalms 27; 29; 30; 34; 47 and other Psalms of praise

Questions for reflection and/or journaling:

1. What does it mean to me that Immanuel has come and now walks with me?
2. How often do I stop to praise God and thank God for the blessings of life?
3. How has God sustained me through a difficult time?

Suggestions for action:

1. Word for your tree: IMMANUEL
2. Sing or listen to some of your favorite praise songs today. Use them to propel you into worship and honor to the Lord.
3. Welcome God into your life today. Take God's presence with you as a conscious act of thanksgiving and praise in your every task. Remember you are never alone.

Closing Prayer:

Immanuel, be with me today. As I go through the ordinary things of this day, I acknowledge that you are present with me and I welcome that presence with open arms. Be my guide and my companion, my friend and my God. I praise your Holy name and honor you with my life. Help me to sing your praises in all that I do, even when I don't understand why certain circumstances happen to me and my loved ones. Thank you for your sustaining love, which stays with me no matter what happens. May the ordinary things of this day become special because you have been a part of this day. In the name of Immanuel, God with us, I pray. Amen.