

December 21st – Tuesday

Centering Breath Prayer: Child of light...may I be excited and expectant.

Opening Prayer:

Immanuel, with the end of the journey and your birth so close now, I praise you for the “good news.” Still my heart and prepare me for your love to be reborn in my heart. Like the shepherds, I, too, am often filled with great fear. But I am also filled, like the shepherds, with great wonder and awe. Your love and comforting presence fills my soul and sustains me. Be with me as we spend this time together in joy and anticipation of your arrival. In the name of the Christ Child, soon to be reborn, I pray. Amen.

Scripture: Luke 2:15-20

Key Verses: Luke 2:15-16: (15) “When the angels had returned to heaven, the shepherds said to each other, ‘Come on, let’s go to Bethlehem! Let’s see this wonderful thing that has happened which the Lord has told us about.’ (16) They ran to the village and found Mary and Joseph. And there was the baby, laying in a manger” (NLT).

After over four weeks of travel on our journey of love, our arrival at the birth and the arrival of our Lord is imminent. Unlike us, the shepherds were caught totally unprepared. They were terrified when an angel of the Lord appeared and began to talk to them. Well, after over four weeks of preparation, are you ready for an angel of the Lord to appear and start talking to you!? But, then, we don’t really need an angel to talk to us about the “good news,” do we? We already know it, don’t we? In fact, some of us have heard the “good news” so often that we are very blasé about it. So, our joy and wonder tends to get a little lost sometimes. This is one of those times when we need to recapture the innocence and total wonder of the little child in us. Because, just as the angel told the shepherds, the birth of our Lord is a great and joyful event. It is so great and so joyful that we celebrate it every year with every tradition we can possibly fit into the season. We sing joyous songs, give gifts to everyone we love and some we hardly know. We bake goodies, and share them with family, friends and neighbors. We decorate our homes, businesses and even our churches inside and out. All in an effort to capture that great joy and wonder all over again.

We are not caught unaware of the Christmas message, like the shepherds were. But, we do get caught preoccupied at times. Sometimes, we get so involved in the everyday happenings of our own little world, that we miss the wonder of the “great and joyful event” we are celebrating. After the shepherds mastered their terror of the angel, they rushed to see this wondrous event. Many of us will attend Christmas Eve services at our churches in a couple of days. Will we go excitedly and expectantly? Will we go eagerly to hear the “good news?” Or will this be just one more chore to get through before Christmas Day? During that night we will celebrate the beginning of the greatest event in human history. This event is not just the birth of Jesus, but his entire life, death and resurrection as well. The event is the redemption of humankind, which only begins with the birth of the Christ Child.

Celebrating the birth of a person is certainly not an unusual event in our country. In fact, we are very fond of celebrating the birth of a child. Announcements are sent out, and often gifts are given for the new baby. But, the celebrations don't end with the actual birth. Each year on the anniversary of the birth we celebrate the birthday. We hold parties, dress up, give gifts and eat cake with ice cream, etc. Birthdays are fun celebrations. Sometimes, for various reasons we are unable to celebrate a birthday on the exact date of the birthday. We still find a time and place to hold the celebration. Sometimes, we even celebrate more than once with various people. Birthday celebrations are shared with family and friends. In countries where there is a king or queen this celebration can be very big and includes the whole country.

So, here we are, nearly ready for the biggest birthday celebration in the world. And, it is proper that it is the biggest celebration of all. Jesus' birth was the most important birth in human history. And, it was for "everybody, worldwide." We may not know the exact date of that birth, but we still want to celebrate. God's love was made know through that birth. Let us be like the shepherds and rush eagerly into the celebration. The time of preparation and travel is coming to an end and the long wait is almost over. That's "good news" isn't it?

Additional Scriptures: Luke 2:1-14

Questions for reflection and/or journaling:

1. How can I increase my sense of joy and wonder at the birth of my Lord?
2. How can I share the wonder and joy of the celebration with others?
3. What are my attitudes as I am about to enter into the celebration of Christ's birth?

Suggestions for action:

1. Phrase for your tree: **EXCITED AND EXPECTANT**
2. Write down your expectation for this Christmas celebration.
3. Play your favorite Christmas music as you finish those last minute tasks that still await.
4. Attend a Christmas Eve church service with joy and anticipation.

Closing Prayer:

Infant Jesus, so soon to be born again in my heart, I am humbled at the love you have shown to me. Throughout this Advent season you have shown me over and over just how much you love me. As I move into the Christmas celebration of your birth, let me reflect that love with my actions. May I become more and more aware of those around me and their needs. May I be open to your will so that I can be used to meet those needs. May my celebration of your birth lead me closer to you and to your people. In your Holy name, I pray. Amen.