



### THIS WEEK'S SCRIPTURES

Luke 2:1-7, John 19:25-27, Ezra 1:1-8,  
Micah 5:2,4, Matthew 2:16-18, Luke 2:4-7,  
Matthew 25:31-40, Proverbs 4:23; Matthew 6:21

### DAY 1

Read [Luke 2:1-7](#), [John 19:25-27](#)

Mary's life involved at least two difficult journeys; one when Jesus was born and one to the foot of the cross where she watched him suffer and die. Even though her journeys were painful trials, she undertook these journeys trusting in God's promise and giving all she had to God's call on her life.

- **How did God turn these difficult journeys into joyful events for Mary?**
- **When have you been called to do something difficult for God?**
- **Reflect on a difficult journey you have taken, either spiritually or physically. How did God use that journey to demonstrate his goodness and faithfulness even during your time of trial?**

### DAY 2

Read [Ezra 1:1-8](#), [Micah 5:2, 4](#)

God often used unlikely people, even ancient pagan rulers, to help his divine plans be fulfilled. King Cyrus of Persia

was used by God in a way that allowed the temple in Jerusalem to be rebuilt. At the time of Christ's birth, God used the census ordered by Augustus to fulfill Micah's ancient prophesy about a king who would come out of Bethlehem.

- **Where have you seen God use the act of a non-believer to carry out God's plan for good?**
- **Do you ever think that you are "not good enough" or not equipped to serve God?**

**Pray for the Holy Spirit to open your eyes to new ways of service and to equip you for that service.**

### **DAY 3**

**Read [Matthew 2:16-18](#)**

The birth of the Christ Child led to the massacre of infant boys in Bethlehem. His coming did not eliminate trials, sorrows or evil acts from affecting our lives. We are bombarded with news stories about murder, massacres, famine, corruption and war. The world still opposes God's great work in our lives, and we are called to advocate for justice in the face of the world's injustice.

- **Do you stand against corruption, poverty, and violence through the way you cast your votes, spend your money, and volunteer your time?**
- **Where do you see God at work in the midst of all that is going wrong in our broken world?**

### **DAY 4**

**Reread [Luke 2:4-7](#), [Matthew 25:31-40](#)**

There was no room for Mary, Joseph, and Jesus at the inn when they arrived in Bethlehem. Today, there appears to be no room in our community for some poor families who

face unexpected journeys and trials. In many ways St. Paul is like one of God's inns. We are called as a congregation to make room for the poor, disenfranchised, vulnerable, lonely, lost and weak.

- **How are you acting as an innkeeper who welcomes our most vulnerable visitors to St. Paul?**
- **Have you prayed about ways that you might serve as a voice that says, "welcome, there is a place for you here" when you see a visitor on our campus?**
- **Consider serving as a welcoming voice and presence Sunday evening at one of our three Christmas Eve Candlelight services at either 6:00, 8:00, or 10:00. [Contact the church office](#) if you are willing to be a "welcoming innkeeper."**

## **DAY 5**

**Read [Proverbs 4:23](#); [Matthew 6:21](#)**

Each of us is the innkeeper of our own hearts. Jesus taught us that we hold our most important treasures in our hearts. Is Jesus the treasure you hold nearest and dearest in your life? It's impossible to give to others what we do not have ourselves. Christ must take the primary place in our hearts if we are to serve our God, our families and God's church.

- **Have you guarded your heart against the temptations of the world this year?**
- **Does your life reflect the presence of Christ on a daily basis?**
- **Ask God to help you build your personal relationship with Jesus in the year ahead.**

## DAY 6

Today is a day of reflection and prayer. Ask God to help you let Christ take the primary position in your heart and to open your heart to those in need around you.

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