

My Prayer Journal

Use this weekly prayer to help you begin your time with God each day.

Prayer of Confession: Gracious God, how often we settle for a ‘glittery greeting card’ kind of peace, or the worn-out kind of peace that lingers when all the wrapping paper has been recycled and the goodbyes have been said. But in our hearts, we long for something more, a strong and lasting peace: when families are reconciled, when the world’s divisions are healed, and human dignity is restored to all. We dream of a peace to come when all people will love mercy, seek justice, and walk humbly with You each day. Heavenly One, forgive our tendency to make this season about shopping for gifts rather than the priceless gift of grace, peace, and reconciliation You have already provided. In Your mercy, hear our prayers...

My Prayers this Week:

Family Time:

How do you feel when you think about the baby Jesus lying in the manger, or when you think about Him lying in His mother’s arm in the stable? The Christmas carol we are talking about in church this week is called “What Child is This?,” and it is a favorite of many people because the words and the tune itself make people feel very calm and peaceful. The song helps us to imagine Mary holding the baby Jesus on her lap, while farmyard animals surround them, quietly eating their hay, and while people of all kinds arrive bringing Him gifts to celebrate His birth. The song asks, what kind of baby would be born in such a plain, not fancy way, and yet still have kings bring Him wonderful gifts? The answer is that this baby is, surprisingly, a King above all other kings! But He is a different kind of king—one who loves everyone the same, and who asks everyone else to follow His example!

MONDAY 12.5.22

Matthew 1:18-25

Our carol for this second week of Advent is the beautiful song “What Child is This?” written in 1865 and set to the 16th century tune known as “Greensleeves.” Just as we saw last week, with “O Come, All Ye Faithful,” a primary theme of this hymn is the identity of the baby lying in the manger—here, asked directly in the first words of the carol, “What child is this who, laid to rest, on Mary’s lap is sleeping?” We will look at the carol’s answer to this question in the song’s refrain on Saturday, but for now we read the account of Jesus’ birth given in the Gospel of Matthew to remind ourselves of the circumstances of Jesus’ birth. Matthew gives a shorter account than Luke, focusing on the Holy Spirit’s role in the pregnancy, the angelic appearance to Joseph, who is directed by the angel to name the baby “Jesus,” and on the birth as the fulfillment of Isaiah’s ancient prophecy of a virgin giving birth to a son, who is “God with us.” What we know is that the child laying on Mary’s lap, greeted by angels, kept watch over by shepherds, surrounded by the “mean estate” of ox and ass, was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the virgin Mary, and given the name Jesus—just as the Apostles’ Creed proclaims!

- What do you think made Joseph receptive to the message he received from the angel in his dream?

TUESDAY 12.6.22

Hebrews 7:11-28

The second verse of “What Child is This?” contains the words “Good Christians, fear, for sinners here the silent Word is pleading.” The phrase suggests that Christians should stand in awe (“fear,” in ancient language) of the reality that the risen Jesus, the Word of God, is at the right hand of God pleading the case for sinners who have put their trust in Him. This is the primary theme of the argument put forth by the writer of Hebrews in today’s Scripture. In the Jewish practice of Jesus’ day, it was the role of the priest to make intercession for the sins of the people, offering sacrifices as prescribed by the Jewish law. The law stipulated that these priests be descendants of Aaron, the brother of Moses, but Genesis 14:18-20 tells the story of a different kind of priest, a man named Melchizedek, who blessed Abraham long before the priesthood of Aaron was even established. The book of Hebrews proclaims that Jesus—who was not a descendant of Aaron—serves eternally as a priest in the order of Melchizedek, and is therefore “able to save completely those who come to God through Him, because He always lives to intercede for them.” The risen Jesus, the Word of God, is indeed, eternally pleading for sinners here on earth.

- Do you think of Jesus as your priest? Why or why not?

WEDNESDAY 12.7.22

Matthew 2:1-12

The first words of the third verse of “What Child is This?” invite the listener to “bring Him incense, gold, and myrrh.” This, of course, is a reference to the story of the Magi, the wise men from the east, that is found in today’s Scripture reading. Ancient philosophers believed strongly that the births of important men were heralded by astronomical phenomena—so when these Magi saw a new, bright, star rising over Jerusalem, they concluded that a new King for the Jews had been born. Of course, when they inquired of the current king, Herod, about the birth, it made him quite agitated, as he too subscribed to such belief. When his priests and experts in Scripture told them to search for the child in Bethlehem, the Magi carried with them traditional gifts for paying homage to a newborn king—incense, gold, and myrrh. In the context of the story, the Magi also represent the non-Jewish world that is in search of the ultimate truth that resides in the baby born in Bethlehem. By worshiping the baby, and presenting Him with their treasures, these “wise men” affirm that in finding Jesus, they have found the ultimate truth that they have committed their professional lives to finding. This week’s carol invites us to do the same.

- How, and why, do you offer your treasures to Jesus?

THURSDAY 12.8.22

Isaiah 60:1-22

The second verse of “What Child is This?” continues: “come peasant, king, to own him.” The Jews at the time of Jesus’ birth were anticipating the coming of a Messiah, an “anointed one” who would restore the Kingdom of God in Israel. This expectation arose from the words of the prophets from as far back as 700 years before the birth of Jesus! As we read in today’s passage from Isaiah, one of the primary expectations of the Messiah was that not only would He reunite the people of Israel who had been dispersed throughout the Mediterranean world, but that peoples and nations from all walks of life, rich and poor, kings and peasants, would be drawn to this “light.” Thus, Isaiah prophecies, “Nations will come to Your light, and kings to the brightness of Your dawn,” and at the same time, “the least of you will become a thousand, the smallest a mighty nation.” The Kingdom this Messiah brought about would be a place that welcomed everyone who would submit to His Kingship—both peasant and king are invited to come and “own” Him, that is, to acknowledge His authority, and place themselves under it. The invitation of the carol, then, is an invitation to recognize Jesus as Israel’s long-awaited Messiah.

- Does your way of living reflect these Kingdom values?

FRIDAY 12.9.22

Revelation 19:11-21

The final lines in the third verse of “What Child is This?” are “the King of kings salvation brings, let loving hearts enthrone Him.” The phrase “king of kings” actually makes use of an ancient idiom, where “something of something” implies the best imaginable of that something—“song of songs,” therefore, means “the best song,” and “king of kings” means “the best king.” The phrase is actually used in the Old Testament three times to refer to two different middle eastern kings—in Ezekiel and Daniel to refer to Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon, and in Ezra to refer to Artaxerxes of Persia. But in the New Testament, the term is used first in reference to God Himself, in Paul’s first letter to Timothy (1 Timothy 6:15), where it is coupled with the similar idiom “Lord of lords.” But the final two occurrences of the term are both in the book of Revelation, first in 17:14, and then, in today’s reading in 19:16—and in both cases, it is a reference to Jesus. And again, in both cases, it is coupled with the title “Lord of lords.” The implication is obvious—Jesus, the child sleeping on Mary’s lap, is God incarnate, King of kings, and Lord of lords. The prophecies of Revelation portray this King of kings bringing God’s ultimate salvation of the entire earth at Judgment Day, just as the carol proclaims.

- Have you personally enthroned Jesus as King in your heart?

SATURDAY 12.10.22

2 Peter 1:3-11

The refrain of our carol this week answers the question posed throughout the song, and in the title itself: “What Child is This?” The response affirms, “This, this is Christ the King,” and implores us to “haste, haste to bring Him laud.” As we saw yesterday, the New Testament affirms that not only is Jesus King, but He is, in fact, the “King of kings.” In today’s reading from 2 Peter, Peter writes about all the personal qualities that are characteristic of those who will “receive a rich welcome into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.” Faith, goodness, knowledge, self-control, perseverance, godliness, kindness, and love are the human qualities that, according to Peter, are required if we are to avoid forgetting our salvation. An eagerness to pursue them, Peter claims, is what prevents us from falling away from our faith. When we remember the words of the prophet Micah that what God requires of us more than “thousands of rams, and ten thousand rivers of oil” is “to act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with Your God” (see Micah 6:6-8), we realize that the “laud” the refrain asks us to bring to Jesus includes not only the incense, gold, and myrrh of verse three, but a human nature being willingly transformed into His goodness and love.

- How are you hastening to bring laud to Christ the King?



Daily Study Guide

December 4-10, 2022

Sermon Series: Carols

Week Two: “What Child is This?” - Rev. J. David Israel

Scripture for Sunday, December 4: Isaiah 11:1-10 (CEB)

“A shoot will grow up from the stump of Jesse; a branch will sprout from his roots. The LORD’s spirit will rest upon him, a spirit of wisdom and understanding, a spirit of planning and strength, a spirit of knowledge and fear of the LORD. He will delight in fearing the LORD. He won’t judge by appearances, nor decide by hearsay. He will judge the needy with righteousness, and decide with equity for those who suffer in the land. He will strike the violent with the rod of his mouth; by the breath of his lips He will kill the wicked. Righteousness will be the belt around his hips, and faithfulness the belt around his waist. The wolf will live with the lamb, and the leopard will lie down with the young goat; the calf and the young lion will feed together, and a little child will lead them. The cow and the bear will graze. Their young will lie down together and a lion will eat straw like an ox. A nursing child will play over the snake’s hole; toddlers will reach right over the serpent’s den. They won’t harm or destroy anywhere on my holy mountain. The earth will surely be filled with the knowledge of the LORD, just as the water covers the sea. On that day, the root of Jesse will stand as a signal to the peoples. The nations will seek Him out and his dwelling will be glorious.”

Things that really impacted me from today’s sermon:

Prayer Requests

- Pat Primm
- Sandra Lewis
- Karen Tanaka
- Mitch Mitchell
- Bill Reichter
- Art Schnatterly
- Nini Schneider
- Jim Kionka
- Kathy Westholt
- Naomi Seacoy
- Tina Vaughn
- Aubrey O’Sullivan
- Traci Bergmeier
- Norton Family
- Fowler Family
- Celeste Kocot
- Coleman Family
- Young Family
- Craig Miller
- Marty Schnatterly
- Kim Short

The Thibault family and friends on the passing of Debbie Thibault

The students, staff, families, and community of Marquette High School

Share prayer requests online at livingwordumc.org