

Advent Week Three

Day 16, Monday, December 13th

"At that time the Roman emperor, Augustus, decreed that a census should be taken throughout the Roman Empire. (This was the first census taken when Quirinius was governor of Syria.) All returned to their own ancestral towns to register for this census. And because Joseph was a descendant of King David, he had to go to Bethlehem in Judea, David's ancient home. He traveled there from the village of Nazareth in Galilee. He took with him Mary, to whom he was engaged, who was now expecting a child."

Luke 2:1-5

At the start of the Christmas story, Joseph believes that Mary has been unfaithful to him, and he initially plans to divorce from her. The Gospel of Matthew tells us that an angel appears to Joseph, convincing him to stay (Matthew 1:18-24). God has a vital role in the Christmas story for Joseph. He wants Joseph to stay with Mary and help her raise this child, the Messiah. God's plans for Joseph are bigger than he can imagine at this one moment. We can imagine this wasn't an easy decision for Joseph - gossip and shame would have followed this young couple everywhere. But Joseph is faithful to this calling from God.

Mary and Joseph get word about the upcoming census and Joseph takes the risk of bringing Mary and their unborn son to Bethlehem. In the midst of a difficult to explain situation, Joseph sticks by Mary and leads her to Bethlehem, where the Christ child will soon be born. As we think about this passage, Joseph's example can inspire us to be faithful in our own relationship with God. It may be that God is asking us to do something difficult, or something that others won't fully understand. But we trust that God knows what God is doing, and that we have each been given an important part to play in the story being written.

REFLECT: Is God calling you to do something difficult? How can you be faithful to that calling? What is the one step you can take today to be obedient?

PRAYER: Lord, thank you for the example of Joseph, who obeyed your will even when it wasn't easy. Give me the courage this week to listen to your voice, and follow in whatever direction you call me. Help me to trust that you will provide all that I need to do the work you are asking me to do. In Jesus' name, Amen.