



Week of November 21, 2021

Welcome the Seasons

Days of Hope, Peace, Love & Joy

Day One | Days of Thanksgiving | Read 1 Thessalonians 1:2-5

Every time we think of you, we thank God for you. Day and night you're in our prayers as we call to mind your work of faith, your labor of love, and your patience of hope in following our Master, Jesus Christ, before God our Father. It is clear to us, friends, that God not only loves you very much but also has put his hand on you for something special. When the Message we preached came to you, it wasn't just words. Something happened in you. The Holy Spirit put steel in your convictions.

- We're entering the week of Thanksgiving. This celebration provides us with a starting point for what we commonly call The Holiday Season; days of wonder and awe, days of hope and peace, love and joy. Take some time today and reflect on the things for which you are grateful. Better yet, write them down, and whenever they include someone you know, consider writing a note to let them know you're grateful.

Day Two | Days of Hope | Read Isaiah 9:2, 6-7

² The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light; those who lived in a land of deep darkness—on them light has shined. ⁶ For a child has been born for us, a son given to us; authority rests upon his shoulders; and he is named Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. ⁷ His authority shall grow continually, and there shall be endless peace for the throne of David and his kingdom. He will establish and uphold it with justice and with righteousness from this time onward and forevermore. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will do this.

- The themes of light and darkness surround us. The amount of daylight hours is minimal at this time of year. To press back against the darkness, we light candles and turn on lights to bring comfort. The prophet Isaiah announced the coming of the Messiah, the light of the world. How does the Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace bring light into your life?

Day Three | Days of Peace | Read Luke 1:26-33

²⁶ In the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent by God to a town in Galilee called Nazareth, ²⁷ to a virgin engaged to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David. The virgin's name was Mary. ²⁸ And he came to her and said, "Greetings, favored one! The Lord is with you." ²⁹ But she was much perplexed by his words and pondered what sort of greeting this might be. ³⁰ The angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. ³¹ And now, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you will name him Jesus. ³² He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Most High, and the Lord God will give to him the throne of his ancestor David. ³³ He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end."

- Days of Peace are coming. Could you use some peace in your life? The promise of peace through Christ is an ancient promise that is brought to fruition today. Read the passage from Luke again. Notice Mary's response. What was the angel's response back to her? That announcement is for you today.

Day Four | Days of Love | Read John 15:9-17

"I've loved you the way my Father has loved me. Make yourselves at home in my love. If you keep my commands, you'll remain intimately at home in my love. That's what I've done—kept my Father's commands and made myself at home in his love. "I've told you these things for a purpose: that my joy might be your joy, and your joy wholly mature. This is my command: Love one another the way I loved you. This is the very best way to love. Put your life on the line for your friends. You are my friends when you do the things I command you. I'm no longer calling you servants because servants don't understand what their master is thinking and planning. No, I've named you friends because

I've let you in on everything I've heard from the Father. "You didn't choose me, remember; I chose you, and put you in the world to bear fruit, fruit that won't spoil. As fruit bearers, whatever you ask the Father in relation to me, he gives you. "But remember the root command: Love one another.

- How do you know that you are loved by your friends and family? They can tell you that they do, but really, how do you know? What does Jesus mean when he makes the invitation to "Make yourselves at home in my love?" How do the people in your life that you love know that you love them?

Day Five | Days of Joy | Reflect on this paraphrase of Luke 1:46-49 (The Magnificat)

I was afraid. How could I not be? I remember it so vividly; the angel appeared out of nowhere and said the strangest things to me. "Greetings favored one! The Lord is with you!" he said. My mouth was as dry as dust. My eyes as wide as saucers and my heart pounding so loudly you could have heard it through my chest! And yet, yet I was surrounded by a deep, deep joy. It was a wonderful terror. And then came these words, "Don't be afraid, Mary, the Almighty God is wrapping you into the most marvelous gift to humankind. In the ongoing story of love, wonder and salvation, God wants to include you in bringing the story of joy to a world in need." And then the angel said this: "Mary, you have found favor with God. Through the power of the Holy Spirit, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you will name him Jesus. He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Most High, and the Lord God will give to him the throne of his ancestor David. He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end." All I could do was obey; to respond to God with my whole self! I trusted God's faithfulness to me and to all of God's people everywhere. And so in the power and majesty of that moment, I simply said, "Here am I, the servant of the Lord; let it be with me according to your word." Then the angel departed from me. I was so happy; I was filled with such joy! And I was afraid no more for nothing is impossible with God."

- Reread that last sentence. How does knowing that nothing is impossible with God bring you joy?