**Day 6**: **Birth of John and Baptism and his father’s prophecy**

Read: Luke 1: 57 – 80

Luke gives us the specifics about the interactions of Zechariah and Elizabeth around the birth of a son in their old age. Remember, Zechariah has not been able to speak! (Day two reading!)

Guided reflections:

1. Don’t you think vs 57 is really talking about a baby shower! There is no scandal in John’s birth.
2. Why was the baby named “John”?
3. Vs 76 reminds us again as to John’s life purpose – what is it?
4. Look at vs 80 – goodness – how did he grow up? I wonder what happened to his parents?
5. Have you ever spent time in the wilderness, growing up?

Guided prayer:

*“O God, You have a purpose for my life. I have sometimes felt like I was growing up in the wilderness (you and God recall together)… Have I found out my purpose yet? Will it include wilderness times as well as “preparing the way” times? Be with me, Lord Jesus. Amen”*

**Day 7:** **The Birth of Jesus**

Read: Luke 2: 1-7 and Matthew 1: 18-25.

Luke’s book is written for non Jewish folks. Matthew is writing to Jewish people and emphasizes the prophecies being fulfilled and the presence of God. Both stories highlight the simplicity and unexpected nature of Jesus’ arrival.

Guided reflections:

1. Can you believe that it took paying taxes to get Mary and Joseph in the right place at the

right time to have Jesus’ birth match the prophecies around the coming Messiah? Now you understand the important of Day one’s genealogy! All the pieces were coming together!

2. Make a mental note of all the circumstances that were “ordinary” in this extraordinary story.

3. Now, look at your own “to do” list for today – what ordinary things are listed could God use your list?

Guided prayer:

*“God of wonder, we wonder why you used such circumstances to orchestrate the birth of the Holy child. I know that this was a cosmic happening, but am I missing your activity in my ordinary life? Take my ordinary life and make my extraordinary. Could You be in something so mundane as paying taxes? Hum… Amen!”*

**Day 8:** **Shepherds and Angels**

Read: Luke 2: 8 – 20

Luke is the only one of the Gospel writers to share the story of the angels and the shepherds. Anyone reading, Jew or Gentile would understand the miraculous nature of these stories.

Guided reflections:

1. We heard the life purpose of John, but now what does the angel say is Jesus’ life purpose?
2. Vs 19 – I wonder if what Mary “ pondered in her heart” kept her going 33 ½ years later at the foot of the cross. In these stories of Mary and Joseph, the angels did not discuss the future pain. Have you had moments with God that you continue to ponder in your heart, especially in the midst of pain? Has Jesus acted as a savior in the midst of pain or suffering for you?

Guided prayer:

*“Loving God, it is probably good that we do not know the end at the beginning. Even in Jesus’ story, his life with such a clear purpose had seasons of joy and of sorrow. Help me to see that you are with me, working in and through me, when all are singing songs of praise as well as when I find myself alone in the garden of Gethsemane. Help me pay attention to what I “ponder in my heart”*

**Day 9:** **Jesus is named and brought to the Temple**

Read: Luke 2: 21-39

Mary and Joseph follow the details of the Angel’s directions and follow the traditions of the day. After eight days, Jesus is taken to the temple which is traditionally expected.

Guided reflections:

1. What were the traditions they followed in this scripture?
2. I love Simeon – an old codger who had a dream that he would see the Messiah – Verses .33-35 gives the first hint of what might lay ahead for these parents…sit in their shoes for a bit…
3. The old gal, Anna, who had gone through her own pain, now gave hope. Where do you see hope today
4. Have you ever had a time when you knew you were in the middle of something great?

Guided Prayer:

*“Hope – you are the God of Hope! As I get old, help me to see signs of hope instead of just despair. Give me a vision of you that keeps me going from this life and into the next. Amen”*

**Day 10:** **Visit of the Wise Men, escape to Egypt**

Read: Matthew 2: 1- 15

Now we go back to Matthew who gives some insight into the way Jesus was viewed by government officials. This passage highlights some of the fear surrounding Jesus’s birth and life. Interestingly, Luke has nothing to say about the wise men who travel to see this baby.

Guided reflections:

1. What kind of people have such curious minds that they follow a star? Do you still have “wonder” inside your heart?
2. Put yourself in Herod’s place. What do you feel as you hear about the baby? Feel threatened? Feel “out of the loop”?
3. Look at verse 12. What do you think helped Mary and Joseph to trust that they shold go “home by another way”?

Guided prayer:

*“Even in the middle of miracles and wonder, evil still lurks with the desire to destroy. Please guide my life so that I can be aware of people who might not have my best interest at heart. Forgive me for the times that my own pride and ego have caused others pain. Amen”*

