

**In sharing our weakness he gives us strength and imparts through his companionship a life that has the quality of eternity.**

*Dallas Willard, The Divine Conspiracy, p. 13*

**Advent, Week Two - Peace**

In the stress and strife of the world around us, God offers us an invitation to a life of peace, a life of safety and strength in Him.

Scripture:

Now the birth of Jesus the Messiah took place in this way. When his mother Mary had been engaged to Joseph, but before they lived together, she was found to be with child from the Holy Spirit. Her husband Joseph, being a righteous man and unwilling to expose her to public disgrace, planned to dismiss her quietly. But just when he had resolved to do this, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, "Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary as your wife, for the child conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. She will bear a son, and you are to name him Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins." Matthew 1:18-21

"I will not leave you orphaned; I am coming to you. In a little while the world will no longer see me, but you will see me; because I live, you also will live. On that day you will know that I am in my Father, and you in me, and I in you....Those who love me will keep my word, and my Father will love them, and we will come to them and make our home with them....I have said these things to you while I am still with you. But the Advocate, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you everything, and remind you of all that I have said to you. Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled, and do not let them be afraid. John 14:18-27

Voice of wisdom:

"Jesus offers himself as God's doorway into the life that is truly life. Confidence in him leads us today, as in other times, to become his apprentices in eternal living. 'Those who come through me will be safe,' he said. 'They will go in and out and find all they need. I have come into their world that they may have life, and life to the limit.'

But intelligent, effectual entry into this life is currently obstructed by clouds of well-intentioned misinformation. The 'gospels' that predominate where he is most frequently invoked speak only of preparing to die or else of correcting social practices and conditions. These are both, obviously, matters of great importance. Who would deny it? But neither one touches the quick of individual existence or taps the depths of the reality of Christ....Does Jesus only enable me to 'make the cut' when I die? Or to know what to protest, or how to vote or agitate and organize? It is good to know that when I die all will be well, but is there any good news for life?

I think we finally have to say that Jesus' enduring relevance is based on his historically proven ability to speak to, to heal and empower the individual human condition. He matters because of what he brought and what he still brings to *ordinary* human beings, living their ordinary lives and coping daily with their surroundings. He promises wholeness for their lives. In sharing our weakness he gives us strength and imparts through his companionship a life that has the quality of eternity. He comes

## Study 2

where we are, and he brings us the life we hunger for. An early report reads, “life was in him, life that made sense of human existence” (John 1:4)

(Dallas Willard, *The Divine Conspiracy*, pgs. 12-13)

### **Contemplation:**

What key words and ideas stand out to you? How do they help you take a deeper look at God’s invitation of peace and strength in Him?

Do you believe Jesus’ coming can make a difference in your life right now, not just after you die? That he can “heal and empower” **your** condition? What are some areas of brokenness or discord where you would like to experience his peace?

The angel told Joseph not to be afraid to take Mary as his wife. He obeyed, but what do you think about his fear level? God often tells people not to be afraid, and Jesus promised to leave us his peace. Do you take him seriously?

### **Practices:**

Write down one or two of the key phrases that are important to you. Hold them (literally) before God and wait silently on him. Record any further thoughts he may give you.

Spend some time this week in Psalm 23. Read slowly, thinking about what each of these familiar phrases means to you, hearing what the Spirit is saying to you about God’s peace, understanding it in terms of your life. Journal about your insights.