

The Second Week of Advent – The Bethlehem Candle

As you light the first candle explain, "The first candle we light is the Prophet's Candle and it reminds us that the coming of Jesus was foretold hundreds of years before His birth."

As you light the second candle explain, "The second candle we light is the Bethlehem candle and it reminds us that Jesus was born in a humble fashion as a servant."

Consider: Last week when we read about Bethlehem we learned that it was not a great city where we would expect someone as majestic as the Son of God to be born. It was a very small, humble place and it serves to remind us of the way in which Jesus entered the world. From his birth to His death Jesus turned our expectations upside-down concerning greatness and power by teaching us that the greatest was not the one who had the most servants, but the one who served the most. So, it is fitting that he was born in Bethlehem in the way that he was demonstrating that he came with humility to serve. Luke 2:1-7 tells the story of how Jesus ended up being born in Bethlehem.

Read the Bible: *In those days a decree went out from Caesar Augustus that all the world should be registered. This was the first registration when Quirinius was governor of Syria. And all went to be registered, each to his own town. And Joseph also went up from Galilee, from the town of Nazareth, to Judea, to the city of David, which is called Bethlehem, because he was of the house and lineage of David, to be registered with Mary, his betrothed, who was with child. And while they were there, the time came for her to give birth. And she gave birth to her firstborn son and wrapped him in swaddling cloths and laid him in a manger, because there was no place for them in the inn. (Luke 2:1-7 ESV)*

Remember: We often expect the greatest gifts to come in the largest packages and to be wrapped up in the most beautiful packaging. We are tempted to put our hope in the things that catch our eye and advertise all the ways that they can make us happy or fulfilled. In Christ we find something surprising, the most valuable gift sent to us without a lot of acclaim and without the appearances of wealth, power, and promise that we often expect in our world. It is interesting that when Jesus was born there was "no place for him" because the same has been true in the hearts of people ever since. We must take great care ourselves to not be distracted by the empty promises that are abundant in our world. If we

are not careful we will find that we have filled our lives with other things and shut out the great gift of God's grace sent to us in Jesus.

Pray: We invite you into our home and heart this Christmas to dwell with us. Thank you for the gracious gift of Jesus Christ who is our true treasure and true joy. Give us the ability to see what is truly valuable this Christmas and to remember to serve and love our neighbors and friends as Christ came to serve and love us.

Experience the Joy: Each week you can take the opportunity to make your Christmas meaningful by doing something practical to share and experience the joy of Christmas. During this week, the project is called Make Room

Many of the most surprising gifts in life are unwrapped by the simple act of hospitality. Our neighborhoods are often collections of disconnected people who happen to dwell on the same street but have never spent any time together. As Christians we serve a God who took on flesh in the person of Christ and dwelt among us. Because he involved himself in our lives we have been transformed. In the same way our neighborhoods should be a place where we seek to not just live and be left alone, but demonstrate the love and friendship of God to the people who dwell the closest to us.

Choose one of your neighbors and plan to have a meal or dessert with them some time in the next two weeks. Try to choose one of the neighbors close by that you have never spent time with or haven't seen in a while. Make a plan and go for it, you never know what gift God may have in store when you Make Room.

Daily Reading: Use the daily readings each week to guide you through scriptures related to Advent and the weekly theme.

Week 2: (Monday – Friday)

Monday - Micah 5:1-5a

Tuesday - Hebrews 1:1-14

Wednesday - John 1:1-14

Thursday - Colossians 1:15-20

Friday - Philippians 2:1-11