

their journey was labeled “unwanted” during the message.

The first half of their journey was easier than the second half which included some hills and mountains. Most scholars believe that Mary and Joseph walked the journey, however, there is some thought that they may have secured a donkey on which Mary could ride. The roads would have been dusty or muddy and there may have been hostiles waiting to prey on vulnerable travelers. What do you think Mary and Joseph discuss as they traveled? What emotions do you believe they expressed? Do you think you could make the journey? Ponder these questions and write your response here.

Thursday, December 23

We spoke about the journey of Mary and Joseph to Bethlehem being unwanted. We each will take undesired journeys in our lives. Journeys home from work after being laid off or furloughed, journeys to the hospital for cancer treatments, journeys to a rehab center to take a child with addiction, journeys to the cemetery to lay a beloved spouse to rest. What have been your undesired journeys? Did you learn anything from those “travels?” Can you see how God could redeem your unwanted journeys for God’s purposes? Write your thoughts here.

Friday, December 24

It’s Christmas Eve!! Pastor Jack often shares the tradition of his family to read the Christmas story from the Bible (Matthew 1:18-25 or Luke 2:1-20) before opening gifts. We’ve talked about how Mary and Joseph’s journey was redeemed by bringing the Christ Child into the world. Perhaps you’re going on a journey during the holidays. How may your journeys be for God’s glory? How can they be redeemed for God’s greatest purposes? Ponder these ideas as you enjoy your celebration of Christ’s birth. Be blessed and be safe! Have a Merry Christmas!

Message Notes – December 19, 2021

The Journey – Mary and Joseph’s Journey Begins*

- I. Would anyone disagree with me if I said marriage takes _____?
 - A. So let’s talk about Mary and Joseph. How much _____ do you think they were under as they entered their marriage?
 1. They were _____ to marry, however, now they had to step things up.
 2. And then there’s the _____; can you imagine that conversation?
 - B. All this is to say that the stress of Mary and Joseph’s journey from Nazareth to Bethlehem was fully _____.
- II. Biblical scholars believed that there were ____ basic routes that Joseph and Mary would have followed.
 - A. Talking about what route Joseph and Mary followed is part of answering four questions we’ve sought to answer in this series of messages in _____.
 1. First, what actually _____ leading up to and including that first Christmas?
 2. Second, what does the story teach us about the character of _____?
 3. Third, what does it tell us about the child whose birth we _____?
 4. Finally, we will ask, what does this story mean for our lives _____?
 - B. This more likely route took Mary and Joseph nearly due south out of Nazareth through the Jezreel _____ and along a road known as the _____ of the Patriarchs.

*Luke 2:1-7

- C. This route is not only _____ – it offers us the opportunity to rejoice that God’s entrance into humanity thorough a faithful Jewish couple was not just for their people but for _____ humanity!
- III. There is little doubt that this journey to Bethlehem was not a journey Joseph and Mary _____ to make.
- A. Friends, we each will take _____ journeys in our lives.
- B. The good news of scripture is God is not only with us in our unwanted journeys; God _____ them for greater purposes.
- C. Mary would have had no idea that we would be reading her story 20 centuries later and reflecting on its _____ for us today.
- D. The prophet Zechariah spoke to the people of his day who were _____ with the difficulty of their life journeys.
1. He wrote, “As for you also, because of the blood of my covenant with you, I will set your prisoners free from the waterless pit. Return to your stronghold, O prisoners of _____ today I declare that I will _____ to you double. (9:11-12)
 2. Know that your difficult journeys are never the end of your story but rather an _____ for the redemptive work of Christ to be accomplished; in _____, in _____, in _____ of us.

Daily Devotional Guide

The following is a daily devotional and study guide meant to enhance your understanding of the message and grow as a Christian.

It is offered for your personal reflection or to share with others.

Monday, December 20

The message began with a question: Would anyone disagree with me if I said marriage takes work? Pastor Jack offered several quotes to back up this thought, including one from 20th Century

Journalist Robert Quillen, wrote, “A happy marriage is the union of two good forgivers.”

Realistically, all relationships require effort to nurture and sustain them. When we say all relationships we mean all relationships from marriages to family to work to church and other organization and our relationship with God. To be blessed by our relationships we must seek to bless those with whom we desire a relationships. Do you agree with these thoughts? Write your own thoughts here.

Tuesday, December 21

Read Luke 2:1-7. In times of stress, the foundation of even the most solid marriages can be shaken. Think of Mary, a young teenaged newlywed and her carpenter husband who from humble means, Joseph. They went through the stress of changing their marriage plans, most likely scrambling to get the word out about the wedding, secure the food and drink for the marriage feast and perhaps even the venue for the wedding. All those hasty preparations were made under the scrutinizing eyes of the community wondering if Mary was pregnant and if Joseph was the father.

Then there was the census! Now, the newlyweds would have to make the 8-10 day journey from Nazareth to Bethlehem and not for a honeymoon! What do you think the stress levels were like for Mary and Joseph? Do you think they received any support from their community? Meditate on these questions and write your ideas here.

Wednesday, December 22

Read Luke 2:1-7. When you understand that the journey Joseph and Mary would have to make was a ten day journey, at the very least an eight day journey, you can understand why