

back pain are experienced by pregnant women. Assuming that Mary is no different from other women who have had children, she was probably not always happy about her circumstances and don't forget Joseph and she had to travel to Bethlehem. What emotions do you think Mary experienced during her pregnancy? What other challenges do you believe she might have encounters well past Jesus' birth? Remember they went into exile in Egypt and they didn't live in a large city. Consider these questions and thoughts and write your reflections here.

### Thursday, December 21

Read Luke 1:39-55. Read slowly again verses 51-53. Meditate for a moment on just those three verses. These verses enumerate God's revolutionary activities in the world that led to moral, social and economic changes in the world. What do you think? Is our Creator God a revolutionary force in our world? Was Jesus a revolutionary figure in our history? Think of how the world might be different without the ministry and mission of Jesus the Christ. How might you be a revolutionary as well; what real and deep changes would you like to see in the world? Write your thoughts here asking for God's wisdom and guidance.

### Friday, December 22

Today we will again explore *Lectio Divina*. *Lectio Divina* is Latin for "holy reading." It is a means of communicating with God, allowing you to listen for God speaking to you. The scripture you will work with is Matthew 2:10-11. Settle in and read this scripture slowly. You may want to read it aloud so that you are not only reading but listening to the words. Read it a second time or have someone else read it for you or listen to a recording of the scripture if possible. Meditate on words that "capture your attention" or give you pause for more exploration. Consider what God might be saying to you in this experience of Holy Reading and listening. Write your reflections here.

## Message Notes – December 17, 2023

### *Fully Human, Fully Divine* - *Deep Joy*\*

- I. Whitney Simpson writes about how we may be experiencing a mix of \_\_\_\_\_ during this time of year, oscillating between high and lows.
  - A. Simpson writes, "Keep this in mind this week as you are invited to sit with joy. It is also vital for us to realize that joy is not \_\_\_\_\_."
    1. \_\_\_\_\_ happens to us.
    2. Joy, on the other hand, is a \_\_\_\_\_, Joy is an internally deep, purposeful \_\_\_\_\_ to receive the gift God longs to cultivate in us.
  - B. Think of Mary, proclaiming that the child within her womb is the work of the \_\_\_\_\_ and the Son of \_\_\_\_\_.
    1. How Mary reacted to that news must have been quite a \_\_\_\_\_; talk about living between the tension between joy and struggle.
    2. Mary could well have become \_\_\_\_\_, given the circumstances of her life.
- II. Mary obviously chose to be \_\_\_\_\_ and I believe all of us can understand that she is not always \_\_\_\_\_ about her circumstances.
  - A. \_\_\_\_\_ can choose joy as well!
  - B. It is and should be a joyous time, even for those who have experienced a \_\_\_\_\_ and are feeling the pain of that \_\_\_\_\_ deeply during this time of year.

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\*Luke 1:39-55

- C. Of course there is the Magnificat proclaimed by Mary: "My soul magnifies the Lord and my spirit \_\_\_\_\_ in God my Savior.
1. I do want to \_\_\_\_\_ you to sit with joy.
  2. Don't sit too long for there is \_\_\_\_\_ power in the words of the Magnificat.
- D. Mary's words are \_\_\_\_\_.
1. God has scattered the proud in the thoughts of their hearts. That's a \_\_\_\_\_ Revolution that would lead to the death of pride.
  2. Second, Mary proclaims that God has brought down the powerful from their thrones, and lifted up the lowly. That's a \_\_\_\_\_ Revolution and will bring the end of the world's labels and prestige.
  3. Finally, Mary shared that has filled the hungry with good things, and sent the rich away empty. That an \_\_\_\_\_ Revolution through which the needs of all will be met.
- III. The Magnificat is \_\_\_\_\_ but at the same time it is \_\_\_\_\_.
- A. Mary exclaimed that God had "done \_\_\_\_\_ things for me, and holy is his name."
  - B. God has done great things for \_\_\_\_\_ and God will continue to do great things!

## *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 18**

Pastor Jack shared during the message that being called a joyful person is one of the greatest compliments he's received. What attributes would you place upon a person you would describe as joyful? Who are some of the most joyful people in your life? Are

you a joyful person? Is joy something you strive to possess? Consider these questions and write your reflections here.

### **Tuesday, December 19**

Whitney Simpson writes, "Keep this in mind this week as you are invited to sit with joy. It is also vital for us to realize that joy is not happiness. Happiness happens to us. It is a feeling or an experience. Sometimes happiness isn't even all that great. A plateful of calorie-loaded fudge may bring me short-term happiness, but that doesn't mean that overindulging in a confectioner's delight is good for me or that my happiness is sustainable. Joy, on the other hand, is a decision. Joy is an internally deep, purposeful choice to receive the gift God longs to cultivate in us.... Our joy is not tied to our circumstances." Even though joy and happiness are often used interchangeably, they are different. Pastor Jack believes they are connected. What do you think is the relationship between joy and happiness? Yesterday, you were asked if you are a joyful person. Today consider whether or not you are a happy person. Write your thoughts here praying for God's wisdom.

### **Wednesday, December 20**

Read Luke 1:39-55. Mary chose to be joyful; that much is obvious. Mary's soul, that is to say her whole being magnifies the Lord and she rejoices in God her Savior. God's call upon Mary's life has given her great purpose and a meaningful mission in life. She has been called upon to raise the Son of God. She is joyful, but according to differences between joy and happiness that were pointed out in the message and in Whitney Simpson's book, it seems likely that Mary was not always happy about her God-ordained mission. Swollen feet, the extra weight, cravings and