

Advent Devotional December 12, 2020

Scripture

Luke 22:31-38

31 "Simon, Simon, listen! Satan has demanded to sift all of you like wheat, 32 but I have prayed for you that your own faith may not fail; and you, when once you have turned back, strengthen your brothers." 33 And he said to him, "Lord, I am ready to go with you to prison and to death!" 34 Jesus said, "I tell you, Peter, the cock will not crow this day, until you have denied three times that you know me." 35 He said to them, "When I sent you out without a purse, bag, or sandals, did you lack anything?" They said, "No, not a thing." 36 He said to them, "But now, the one who has a purse must take it, and likewise a bag. And the one who has no sword must sell his cloak and buy one. 37 For I tell you, this scripture must be fulfilled in me, 'And he was counted among the lawless'; and indeed what is written about me is being fulfilled." 38 They said, "Lord, look, here are two swords." He replied, "It is enough."

Devotional

The Rev. Jo Ramsey '99

Bethlehem was a long way away from Nazareth. It was an inopportune time to travel for the young couple, and they had no place to stay. Mary was nearly due to deliver her first child. I wonder what they took along.

Several years ago, the children of our church imagined Mary and Joseph's packing list and retraced their steps on the road to Bethlehem. Each child received a saddlebag fashioned from a paper grocery bag. With much excitement, they imaginatively stopped by Joseph's parents' home, where they were given several coins. Next, they visited the house of Mary's parents, where each one received a fleece bedroll. Then they visited the travel agent for a roadmap. On their way out of town, they ducked into the market to buy a granola bar and bottle of water. A quick stop at the synagogue for a blessing, and they were on their way. As the children added each item to their saddlebags, their anticipation grew. They couldn't wait to hit the road! They loved accruing and carrying their gear. Don't we all—especially at Christmastime?!

Today's lectionary text doesn't read like lyrics from a Christmas carol, but it makes a surprising connection to Jesus' birth. When Mary and Joseph arrive in Bethlehem, there is no room at the inn, the *kataluma* (Luke 2:7). Luke uses this word only one other time . . . to describe the room where Jesus and the disciples have gathered for the Passover Meal, the Last Supper (22:11). But this time, there *is* room.

In this *kataluma*, Jesus reminds his disciples that twice before he has instructed them to bring nothing for the journey. No sandals, money belt, no tunic. God will provide all they need through those whom they serve. But times are changing. No longer can they rely on others. They must provide for and protect themselves.

Each one of us takes our own journey. Like Mary and Joseph on the way to the manger (Bethlehem) and the disciples on the way to the cross (Golgotha), we do not know what the future holds. Do we need a money belt or swaddling clothes, a sword or gifts for the newborn king?

What do you need to procure for your journey right now? Peaceful quiet? Inspiring prayer? Meaningful conversation? Engaging service? How can you prepare yourself to trek through the holidays and into the new year ahead? Make a spiritual shopping list today, and commit to acquiring what you need to walk with God.

Prayer

Heavenly Father, we look to you during this Advent journey. We trust that you will provide for and protect us, sometimes in unexpected ways. Help us to recognize, rely on, and appreciate your goodness. May we also take responsibility for ourselves, tending to and safeguarding our faith so that we are ready for all the new year brings. In the name of Jesus, our newborn King. Amen.