

The Story, Luke's Version

Monday, 12/22/08 – Read Luke 1:39-45

My Observations: _____

A Question to Answer: The Bible's story of Jesus' birth includes this incident, Mary visiting her relative Elizabeth. Elizabeth declares that the child in her womb leaped with joy at the presence of God. ... Have you ever had an experience when you seemed to recognize the very Presence of God, God present here in our world, and something in you seemed to leap for joy? ... Describe what that experience was like for you?

Tuesday, 12/23/08 – Read Luke 1:46-55

My Observations: _____

A Question to Answer: One of the great moments in the Bible's story of Jesus' birth is Mary's song of praise, "The Magnificat." When God pours the Divine Self into the world, into human life, things change, the conditions of life begin to change. Mary's song describes the changes and the new conditions that result from God's outpouring. Read through Mary's song again and note the changes and conditions she mentions. Where have you seen those changes and conditions in your life and in the world?

Wednesday, 12/24/08 – Read Luke 2:1-7 and John 1:14

My Observations: _____

A Question to Answer: Notice that the Bible goes to some pains to locate Jesus' birth ... at a particular historical moment ... and in a real place. This is not a "once upon a time" kind of story. And the birth itself is described in a matter-of-fact kind of way: "And she gave birth to her firstborn son ..." The birth of Jesus in this real world shows us that God is involved in this world and in our very real lives. Into what part of your real life do you today want to welcome the baby Jesus? What part of our real world do you want God to be directly involved in?

Thursday, 12/25/08 – Read Luke 2:8-14

My Observations: _____

A Question to Answer: The night that Jesus was born the angels sang. Heaven itself was flowing into the temporal world. God was irrevocably committing the himself to us and to our world. And the result was a beauty beyond magnificence. ... Remember a time when you have felt overwhelmed by beauty. Could that have been the very presence of God? What do you think?

Friday, 12/26/08 – Read Luke 2:15-16

My Observations: _____

A Question to Answer: The focus of all this excitement with the angels and the singing is a baby, a baby in a manger. Now remember that a manger is an animal's feeding trough. ... Let the contrast sink into your mind -- the contrast between the overwhelming majesty of God's very presence and the lowliness of a peasant's stable. Let that sink in. ... If God

arrives in a baby in a manger, what does that say about how God relates to you, to us -- to the "lowliness" in our lives?

Saturday, 12/27/08 – Read Luke 2:17-19

My Observations: _____

A Question to Answer: How do you normally feel AFTER Christmas? Is there a letdown? Do you ever have a feeling that says, "OK, that's done. Let's move on. What's next?" ... Compare that reaction to Mary: Mary TREASURED all the words of the shepherds and PONDERED them. ... How often we run by an important moment and miss something deeper because we didn't linger over it. This year will you take some time to treasure and to ponder?

Sunday, 12/28/08 – Read Luke 2:20

My Observations: _____

A Question to Answer: This experience is not complete until the shepherds go back to their sheep, "glorifying and praising God." Our most important experiences are not complete until we have given thanks, until we have acknowledged God as the source and origin of the wonder, the beauty, the grandeur, and the saving good news in our lives. ... Are there some experiences you still need to complete by giving thanks to God? As you celebrate Jesus' birth this year, will you complete the experience by explicitly saying "thank you" to God?

My Faith Journal, December 21, 2008

Fourth Sunday of Advent

The Light at the End of the Tunnel

What do I hear God saying to me today?

What action do I intend to take this week?

Each day this week, take a few minutes. Begin with PRAYER. Then READ through the Bible passage indicated on the inside of this guide. WRITE down your own thoughts, reactions, observations. ANSWER THE QUESTION to begin connecting the Bible with your life experience. Use additional paper or your own notebook if you need more space to write.