

Prayer and Study Guide

Daily Scripture Readings – 12/9/18

Monday – Read Luke 1:26-29 and Genesis 1:27, 31. **Hail Mary, full of grace, the Lord is with you.** *Hail* is an English term that means *hello, hi, or greetings*, but the Latin is *Ave*. Thus, we have “*Ave Maria*.” “*Greetings, Mary*.” Or, “*Hail, Mary*.” In Greek, the actual word we find in Luke’s Gospel is the word *Charis*, which signifies a *rejoicing*. Its root is really *grace*. So, the angel says, “*Grace to you, Mary*.” “*Rejoice, Mary*.” “*Be glad Mary*.” Luke says that Mary was *Kecharitomene*. She was full of grace. God has a tendency to use people who are full of grace. God blesses them, calls them, and uses them for remarkable things when they are full of grace. Ask God to fill you with grace and use you to offer grace to others.

Tuesday – Read Luke 1:30-35. **The Virgin Birth.** Gabriel the child would be called *the Son of God*. He would be both fully human and fully divine. In the Nicene Creed, we state: “*We believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ, the only Son of God, eternally begotten of the Father, God from God, light from light, true God from true God, begotten, not made, of one Being with the Father; through him all things were made. For us and for our salvation he came down from heaven, was incarnate of the Holy Spirit and the Virgin Mary and became truly human.*” Jesus is the very essence of God. The Creed uses the Greek word, *homoousia*, which mean *of the same substance or essence*. He has a unique identity because in him, God became flesh and lived among us. Jesus is *Emmanuel* which means **God with us**. The ancients would later say about Jesus, “*He is like us, so he will help us. He is not like us, so he can help us.*” As you pray, consider how God coming to us through Jesus demonstrates God’s love for us.

Wednesday – Read Luke 1:36-38. **A Special Calling.** Gabriel encourages Mary by telling her of Elizabeth’s pregnancy and telling her, “*Nothing will be impossible with God.*” Then, Mary submits to God’s special calling on her life. Mary plays a greater role in the salvation of the human race than any other human being except Jesus himself. The redemption of humanity and God’s plan to step into our world all hinged on how Mary responded to Gabriel. When the God of the universe asked Mary to help with God’s plan for salvation for the world, Mary said, “*Yes,*” to God. It wasn’t easy for her to say, “*Yes.*” Mary was a young woman who was willing to risk everything in order to bring about salvation for the human race. For nine months, divinity resides within her womb. When Jesus was born, she nurtured him and taught him God’s ways. In the early Church they called her *Theotokos* which means *The God Bearer* or *The Mother of God*. God was born in human flesh through her womb. William Barclay says, “*The piercing truth is that God does not choose a person for ease and comfort and selfish joy but for a task that will take all that head and heart and hand can bring to it.*” Ask God to help you submit to God’s will for your life as Mary did.

Thursday – Read Luke 1:39-45. **Finding Joy through a Mentor.** When Gabriel told Mary she would bear the Messiah, he told her that Elizabeth was also pregnant. It seems likely that Mary yearned to be with a woman who could understand her experience. She made the nine-day journey to Judea and spent time with Elizabeth. Elizabeth helped Mary find joy in the angel’s message, and Mary expressed her joy through song. Elizabeth mentored Mary. Spend some time thanking God for your mentors and asking God to give you opportunities to mentor young people in your life.

Friday – Read Luke 1:46-55. **The Magnificat.** ⁴⁶ *And Mary said, “My soul magnifies the Lord, ⁴⁷ and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior, ⁴⁸ for he has looked with favor on the lowliness of his servant. Surely, from now on all generations will call me blessed; ⁴⁹ for the Mighty One has done great things for me, and holy is his name.* Mary’s song is a song of praise. The Greek word translated *lowliness* meant the socially low, poor, powerless, and unimportant. Yet God has looked upon lowly, unimportant, insignificant Mary, and as Mary says, “*has done great things for me.*” The word for *great things* is a variant of *magnify*. Mary says, “*My soul magnifies God because he has magnified me!*” She understood what James teaches us: *Humble thyself in the sight of the Lord, and He will lift you up.* Humble yourself by spending some time in prayer on your knees. Express your thanks to God for the great things God is doing for you.

Saturday – Read Psalm 98:1-9. **Joy to the World.** Isaac Watts based *Joy to the World* on Psalm 96:11-12 and Psalm 98:4-9 which celebrates the coming of the Lord to judge the world in righteousness. The psalmist calls on all creation to sing and shout for joy at his coming. This hymn celebrates God’s involvement with God’s people, and this work of God began at the manger in Bethlehem. As of the late 20th century, *Joy to the World* was the most-published Christmas hymn in North America. As you pray, sing a verse of *Joy to the World* to God as an act of joyful praise.

Lectionary Readings: Malachi 3:1-4; Luke 1:68-79; Philippians 1:3-11; Luke 3:1-6.

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