

ADVENT DEVOTIONAL

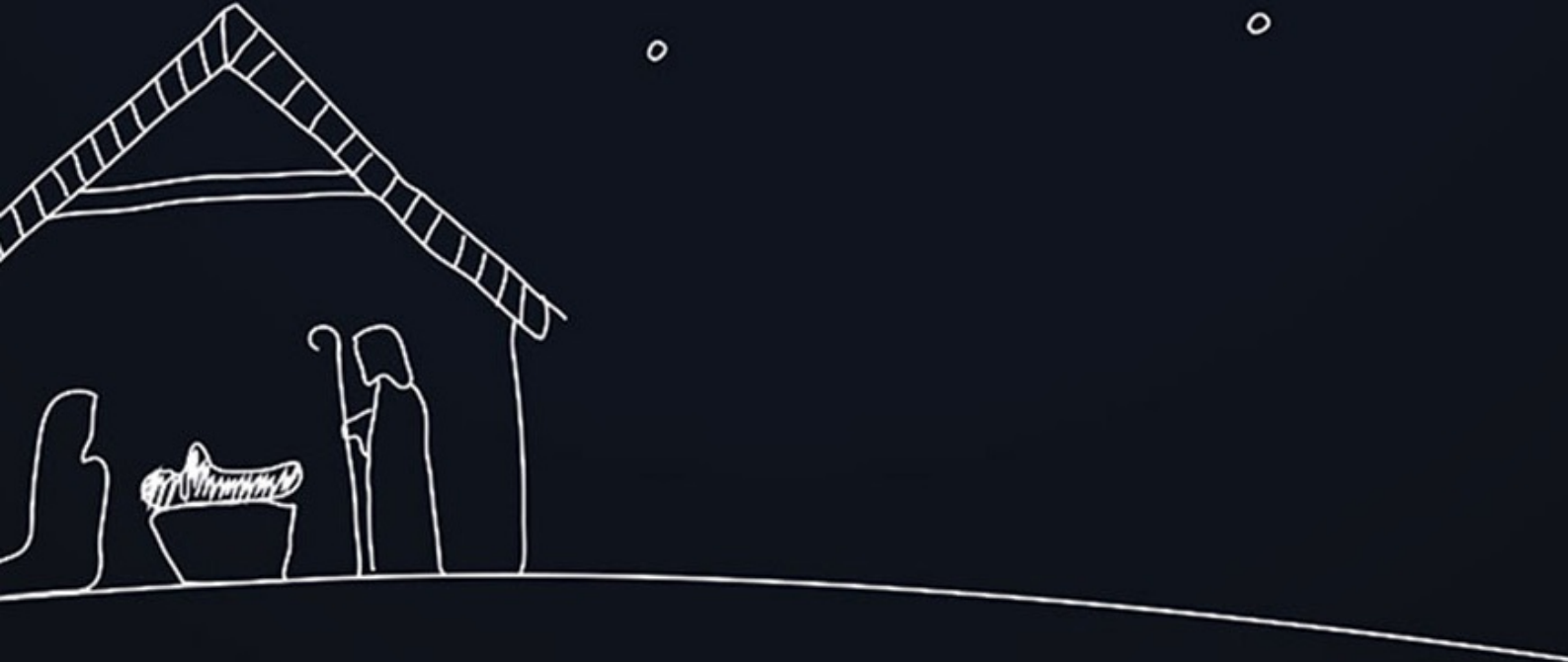


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ADVENT DEVOTIONAL DECEMBER 25, 2020

SCRIPTURE

ZECHARIAH 2:10-13

10 Sing and rejoice, O daughter Zion! For lo, I will come and dwell in your midst, says the LORD. 11 Many nations shall join themselves to the LORD on that day, and shall be my people; and I will dwell in your midst. And you shall know that the LORD of hosts has sent me to you. 12 The LORD will inherit Judah as his portion in the holy land, and will again choose Jerusalem. 13 Be silent, all people, before the LORD; for he has roused himself from his holy dwelling.

DEVOTIONAL

The Rev. Nathan Carlson '11

Every year, our family pulls out an antique, handcrafted nativity set to put up on Christmas morning. The scene still fills our children's hearts with joy as I tell the story. Just prior to placing the infant Jesus in the manger, we share stories about what it means that Jesus came to earth as a human child. We hear echoes of this meaning found early in the Scriptures, such as this one from Zechariah 2. In verses 10-13 we hear the promise that the Lord "will come and dwell in your midst." Every year, one or another of our children has a personal epiphany that the greatest present received on Christmas morning came long ago in the birth of this Christ child.

During the placement of the pieces of the crèche, one of my favorite moments involves talking about the magi from the East—the ones who show up much later in the biblical story. We discuss how, even at Jesus' birth, people from other nations have already recognized this child's coming as something special. The birth we remember today drew some most unexpected "others" forward to pay homage to the newborn king. These magi embody Zechariah's prophecy in verse 11: "many nations shall join themselves to the Lord on that day, and shall be my people." Their presence reminds us that this first Christmas Day was truly for all people, in every nation and across every land. That Christmas Day is *still* for everyone should ring out from our celebrations.

As I write today, I find the last verse of Zechariah to be the most striking. As we contemplate the infant Jesus lying in the manger, in whatever form our contemplation takes in this year's Christmas celebrations, let us consider this deep mystery in our hearts: "Be silent . . . for he has roused himself from his holy dwelling." What does it mean for us that the Lord of heaven and earth lay in a manger? What does it mean for each one of us that Jesus "roused himself" from his holy dwelling place to take up residence among us in the form of a sleeping infant? Take a moment to think of the power and wonder of this mystery. Unlike the noisy activities that fill much of Christmas Day, take some time to sit in silence in the presence of such deep and abiding divine love.

PRAYER

Almighty God and Lord of hosts, we gather in our hearts around your first, humble, earthly throne. Fill us with joy—overwhelm us with the mysterious grace of your dwelling among us. In a day that often overwhelms us, prepare for us a silent time of contemplation that we might kneel by your cradle and meditate on your presence. As we delight in you, remind us that you have come for all people, that you have chosen to reside with us, and that you desire nothing but our unfettered love in response. Amen.

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