

Daily Prayer:

Begin each day by praying aloud the Christmas prayer from this week's message outline.

DAY ONE - waiting . . .

Read Isaiah 40:1-5 and 46:3-5, 9-11.

Do you find it difficult to wait? Drive up and voice your request - pull up to the next window and fulfill your part of the transaction - move forward and receive your order.

Quick rise yeast - five minute pizza - one click shopping - next day delivery.

Is it any wonder we might be tempted to approach God in the same manner?

Hearing, believing, knowing, yet... waiting, wondering, hoping, doubting, praying.

When everything around them appeared to be without hope, what did Zechariah and Elizabeth do? (*Luke 1:6*) "Zechariah continued..." praying, serving, and listening for God's voice. Believing in God, in His goodness, in his provision for us, even when we can't see that provision - isn't that what faith is? "being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see" *Hebrews 11:1*

"I believe in the sun even when it isn't shining. I believe in love even when I'm alone. I believe in God even when He is silent." These words were found scratched on a cellar wall where Jews had hidden during World War II in Cologne, Germany.

Prayer: God, help us in our unbelief. Help us to continually grow in our faith and trust in you. I thank you for the abundant provision and care you pour into my life each day, whether I am able to see it or not, I know it is there.

DAY TWO - usher in a new ridiculous

Read Zechariah's Song (*Luke 1:67-79*). Finally! The day that had been foretold since the beginning is here! Imagine hearing these words, witnessing the birth of the one who would prepare the way of the Lord. Try to imagine all this from their side of the cross.

Read through the scripture again. Look for particular verses that may have been seen as indicators of what was about to happen in their world. (*i.e. salvation from our enemies and from the hand of all who hate us... freedom from Roman oppression?*) Now add to these thoughts what the angel had told Mary (*Luke 1:31-33*). What do you think they were expecting? The entire world was about to witness a thing too ridiculous, too preposterous to even conceive...

"She will give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins." *Matthew 1:21*

From our side of the cross, we still wrestle with the idea that God, creator of all, would clothe himself in humanity by becoming one of us, not to reign as King, but to be sacrificed on behalf of our sin. The mere thought of something so ridiculous would have seemed blasphemous! Do you think God may have more preposterous things in store for us?

ridiculous



DAY THREE - childish?

"I don't want God if God is a god that would kill his own son."

"If God is _____, then he can't be God." Both thoughts are equivalent to boldly declaring, "If breathing air is what's required to be alive, then I don't want to live!" When we assign parameters to God, we've become our own god.

Read Matthew 19:16-22. This young man couldn't accept God if what Jesus said was true. He chose a false god - his own belief about what God should and shouldn't be. How readily do we give up or become disillusioned with God when he comes, moves, or works in a way we don't expect or don't understand? Is it possible we've filled in that statement ("If God is _____, then he can't be God.") in our own heart? Will we lay aside any conditions to following God? Ask God to reveal anything we've allowed to disillusion or cause us to take a step back from following him completely.

DAY FOUR - or childlike?

Read John 6:60-69. Look at Peter's response to Jesus in verses 68-69.

Compare his response with that of the young man from yesterday's scripture. Peter wasn't given extra understanding or even an explanation to what Jesus was teaching. Nevertheless, Peter, with childlike trust, followed Jesus despite not understanding. What do you think made the difference?

A question arises in Frances Chen's book *Crazy Love*, "If heaven consisted of everything you enjoyed, all your favorite people and food, no pain, suffering, etc. but not Jesus, would you still want to go?"

We had the unfortunate "What is life insurance?" conversation when our kids were much too young. There was just no way to convince them it would be okay if something happened and we (*Mom and Dad*) weren't here. We were life, we were everything to them, and without us, they simply were not. As we attempt to "grow up," are we childishly thinking "I can do it myself?" Peter may not have known much about God or how he should behave. He didn't understand Jesus, but he *knew* Jesus. *Lord, where else would I go if not with You?*

DAY FIVE - God is good

Exactly what do you mean by *good*? Who gets to define *good*?

Are your circumstances the barometer of God's love and goodness?

Financial prosperity? Happiness? If God loves us and is good, then why?

God's love and goodness is not measured by any of these things.

Read John 3:16-17.

Our answer is found in the cross. When God clothed himself in humanity it was so that one day we might be clothed in God. Is God good? Oh, yes, HE IS GOOD! Prepare to celebrate the birth of our God. Celebrate the goodness of God. Worship Him, not because we can understand Him or make sense of His love and goodness. Worship Him because we can't fathom that kind of love and goodness! Worship Him because HE IS GOD! Conclude this week by reading Isaiah 53. Worship God by singing the Christmas hymn *What Child is This?*