

A New Year of Contemplation

Study Guide for Small Group Discussion and Personal Application
Lynn Haven UMC – December 13, 2020 – Pastor Terry Tatum

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Today is the third Sunday in Advent, the four Sundays that lead up to Christmas. During the Advent season Lynn Haven UMC is reading a devotional titled “The Christian New Year” by J.D. Walt. For more information visit LynnHavenChristmas.com.

In the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Caesar—when Pontius Pilate was governor of Judea, Herod tetrarch of Galilee, his brother Philip tetrarch of Iturea and Traconitis, and Lysanias tetrarch of Abilene— during the high priesthood of Annas and Caiaphas, the word of God came to John son of Zechariah in the desert. He went into all the country around the Jordan, preaching a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. As is written in the book of the words of Isaiah the prophet: “A voice of one calling in the desert, ‘Prepare the way for the Lord, make straight paths for him. Every valley shall be filled in, every mountain and hill made low. The crooked roads shall become straight, the rough ways smooth. And all mankind will see God’s salvation.’” (Luke 3:1-6 NIV)

Luke is speaking of John the Baptist in this passage, and he quotes a prophecy from the book of Isaiah given some 700 years earlier. Sometimes we lose sight of the fact that God is working in the world and has been working for many centuries. We get caught up in the busyness of life and we become spiritually sleepy. The call of Advent is to “Wake Up!” from our spiritual slumber, allow God to refresh and renew us, and to see the world through God’s eyes.

One key element of “waking up” is making time for spiritual contemplation, which looks like this:

1) Reflect

Luke 1:5-25 tells about an incident when Zechariah could not speak.

Our lives can be very noisy, and we fail to develop inner quietness and peace. Consider the “Quiet Game” challenge (devotional, p. 31-32)

2) Repent

Luke 3:3 – John the Baptist calls people to a baptism of repentance.

When we make time to reflect and find inner quiet, God often speaks to us about areas of our lives He would like to change. Repent is a good word! (devotional,

p. 39) Repentance is not just walking away from something bad, it is running towards what is good. Take this time to receive forgiveness from God and find a new direction.

3) Realign

Matthew 11:2-6 – Christ instructs His disciples to go report to John all the good they see Jesus doing.

“We want life to turn out the way we think it should. It doesn’t work like that. Our expectations of others and of God are unrealistic.” (devotional, p. 45) We find ourselves frustrated and disappointed. We must realign our assumptions and expectations.

Conclusion

⇒ How can you Reflect this week? How might you make more time for inner silence and contemplation? Is this already a part of your daily ritual, or something you need to add?

⇒ How can you make time to Repent this week? When you find silence, what is God speaking to you about? How can your repenting be not just “I’m sorry” but constructively picking a new direction?

⇒ How do you need to Realign your expectations this week? Are there areas of life where you are frustrated or disappointed - with yourself, others, or God? Don’t be afraid to admit your disappointment. What would more realistic expectations look like?