

Bible Challenge December 28 - January 3, 2016

INTRODUCTION: *As we celebrate Christmas, we look for new life, life that has been healed or restored because God is with us—Immanuel. The readings this week all present new life primarily in terms of changes in and for the community. Isaiah imagines Israel with restored national honor and tribute coming from other peoples. Psalm 72 describes an ideal king who will bring justice to the needy, prosperity to the land, and respect from other nations. The passage from Colossians urges its readers to seek new life, not by an external change, but by changing the way they treat others within their community. In the gospel story, Jesus as a twelve-year-old presents a still different example of new life, one that seemed to confuse his parents.*

FIRST READING: Isaiah 60:1-6

Adventure Challenge: Isaiah 60.

Explorer Challenge: Using dictionaries, maps, or Bible references, find out where Midian, Ephah, Sheba, Kedar, Nebaioth, and Tarshish are located. Would they have special significance for Isaiah?

(Note: there is more than one Sheba. Some of these place names also appear in the psalm for this week.)

PSALM: Psalm 72:1-7, 10-14

Adventure Challenge: Psalm 72.

Explorer Challenge: This “royal psalm” may have been used to celebrate a coronation of a king, perhaps Solomon. Make a list of what the psalmist is hoping for with this king. If you were writing a New Year’s prayer for President Obama, are there things that you might add to or subtract from this list?

SECOND READING: Colossians 3:13-17

Adventure Challenge: Colossians 3:1-17 (or 3 – 4:1).

Explorer Challenge: The passage from Colossians 3 offers positive advice about how to live a new life in Christ. Read Colossians 2:8-23 to learn the negative ideas that the author of Colossians was arguing against.

GOSPEL: Luke 2:41-52

Adventure Challenge: Luke 2:21-52

Explorer Challenge: Read Exodus 12:1-27 and Numbers 9:2-14 to learn of the requirements to observe Passover. What questions might Jesus have asked about these requirements while he was “sitting among the teachers”?

PRAYER OF THE DAY

Almighty and ever-living God, you revealed the incarnation of your Son by the brilliant shining of a star. Shine the light of your justice always in our hearts and over all lands, and accept our lives as the treasure we offer in your praise and for your service, through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION: Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, and let the word of Christ dwell in you richly.) *Col. 3:15, 16*)