



Take5 for the week of December 14-18, 2015

Jesus – At the Center of it All

By Carolyn Taketa

MONDAY

Hope Anticipated

John 1:1-14

Consider the historical context of Jesus' birth as described by writer Philip Yancey, "For the Jews in Palestine at the dawn of the first millennium, all hope seems like a fairy tale. As Middle Eastern empires rise and fall, the tiny nation of Israel can never break free from the domination of greater powers. For four centuries of God's silence, the Jews wait and wonder. God seems passive, unconcerned, and deaf to their prayers. Only one hope remains, the ancient promise of a Messiah; on that promise the Jews stake everything. And then something momentous happens. The birth of a baby is announced – a birth unlike any that have come before." Suddenly, the silence is broken and there is a burst of angelic activity unlike any seen before. "The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us." God has not abandoned His people, He had been waiting and working out His purposes in His perfect timing.

FOR TODAY: Thank God for sending Jesus Christ as the savior of the world!

TUESDAY

Hope has a Name

Luke 1:31-33, Isaiah 9:6-7

The angel proclaims that Mary's son will be Jesus, the savior, the long-awaited messiah, and the Son of the Most High God. Jesus fulfills the ancient prophecy of hope from Isaiah 9:6-7:

"For to us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government will be on his shoulders. And he will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. Of the greatness of his government and peace there will be no end. He will reign on David's throne and over his kingdom, establishing and upholding it with justice and righteousness from that time on and forever."

Christ is hope embodied in human form. Each of these names for Christ (along with others in Scripture) describes the attributes and the character of our God. Which of these names for Jesus resonate with you and give you hope this Christmas season?

FOR TODAY: Meditate on the names of Jesus and the qualities they describe.

WEDNESDAY

Hope Incarnate

Philippians 2:1-11; John 1:1-14

Jesus Christ "emptied himself" of the attributes of His divine identity as God and chose to take on the "very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness." As the NLT Chronological Bible commentator writes, "The Incarnation was the act of the preexistent Son of God voluntarily assuming a human body and human nature. Without ceasing to be God, He became a human being... Jesus of Nazareth was subject to place, time and many other human limitations." Jesus laid down the privileges of heaven, took the humble form of a helpless baby, and subjected himself to the difficulties of human life such as hunger, thirst, sorrow, and pain. Why? Because Jesus' birth, life, death, and resurrection demonstrated God's love, fulfilled His plan for salvation, and embodied hope for the world.

FOR TODAY: Give up something today as a reminder of what Christ gave up for you.

THURSDAY

Present Hope

2 Thessalonians 2:13-16

The holiday season often adds stress, relational conflicts, financial debt, and unrealistic expectations into an already busy and challenging life. This can lead to feeling overwhelmed and hopeless. Yet, Jesus came to bring love, grace, freedom, redemption, joy, forgiveness, peace, and hope to everyone. These are not merely idealistic concepts but truths rooted in Scripture, lived out in the person and work of Jesus Christ. Because of Jesus, we can have hope not just for the future, but also for today. We will not find lasting peace or satisfaction by trusting in our circumstances or our abilities to provide for ourselves. Hope and contentment emerge as we increasingly lean into the goodness of our God and grow in trusting Him. In what area of life do you need the hope Christ offers? As the Apostle Paul prayed in Romans 15:13 "May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in him, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit."

FOR TODAY: If you are struggling this season, ask a friend to pray with you. If you know someone who is feeling hopeless, pray that they will experience God's hope this Christmas.

FRIDAY

Eternal Hope

Titus 2:11-14; 1 Peter 3:15-16

One day, this present world and its brokenness will be over and Jesus Christ will come again in glory. As Christ-followers we wait eagerly for "the blessed hope -- the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ." In the meantime, we must be ready to give an answer to anyone who asks about the reason for the hope within us. With Christmas carols playing in every store and decorations all around, the Christmas season may cause someone in your life to wonder about who Jesus is, how He lived, why He died, and whether He was really raised from the dead. They may be asking, "What difference can Jesus make in my life?" How will you answer? Who in your life needs to know about the hope that Christ offers?

FOR TODAY: Look for an opportunity to share how faith in Christ gives you hope for now and for eternity.