

Christmas at the Movies Advent Devotion –Week 2

Scripture: Matthew 1:19-21 (NRSV)

Her husband Joseph, being a righteous man and unwilling to expose her to public disgrace, planned to divorce her quietly. But just when he had resolved to do this, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, “Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary as your wife, for the child conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. She will bear a son, and you are to name him Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins.”

Theme: Peace

Movie: National Lampoons Christmas Vacation

Movie Quote: Clark Griswold said, "It's the Christmas star. And that's all that matters tonight. Not bonuses or gifts or turkeys or trees. See kids, it means something different to everybody. Now I know what it means to me."

Reflection: Peace is fragile but resilient.

Clark Griswold is the king of high expectations when it comes to his family and the holidays. He is distracted by his need for perfection and is continually disappointed in family, coworkers and things.

Occasionally he finds peace, yet it is easily whisked away. When he thinks he can control a rude driver, he terrifyingly drives his family filled car under a semi-truck. His perfect tree is so big it breaks their living room window. He avoids his messy family by putting up 25,000 twinkly lights that don't even work during the big reveal. He proudly starts to carve a turkey and it blows up. Unexpected guests, more explosions and no end-of-year bonus make him think peace is impossible.

Joseph is betrothed to Mary and likely feels such hope and even pride. Yet, his peace is shattered when it is discovered she is pregnant. As a good and faithful man he plans to divorce Mary quietly and just get on with his life. He wants peace, but our human understanding of peace needs God to be truly resilient. When the angel comes to show him the way of peace, his fear disappears. He is given the strength to face the gossip and judgment, and he gets to be the earthly father of the Savior.

As humans, we want things to go as planned. We want our holidays and really our lives to be a Norman Rockwell sketch and to never need editing or filters to be Instagram/Facebook worthy. Yet, life is messy. We are all imperfect.

In our fragility, we can find resilient peace. God offers us peace that is not dependent on our perfection or our expectations, but is made possible by the perfect gift of Jesus.

Questions:

What expectations are getting in your way of celebrating the real reason for this amazing season, Jesus, Immanuel?

What are you doing to open yourself to the perfect and lasting peace God offers you through the gift of Jesus, Immanuel?

Songs:

Contemporary – Glory by Matt Maher,

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QW4c6DcxgGc>

Traditional – O Little Town Of Bethlehem by Gaither Vocal Band

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CwfkGj51S2c>

Prayer:

God,

Cover us with your grace when our expectations of self and others are disappointed. Help us change our expectations to ones we and others can meet this holiday. Fill us with your peace that is beyond our understanding and is available to us in every circumstance. Let us be instruments of your peace.

In your peace, amen.