

For behold, the darkness shall cover
the earth,
And deep darkness the people;
But the LORD will arise over you,
And His glory will be seen upon you.
The Gentiles shall come to your light,

"The Light shines in the darkness ..."

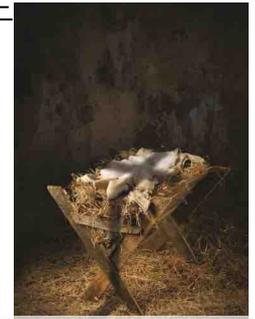
Joel Stewart
World Team Cambodia Field
Preah Vihear, Cambodia

Christmas Eve 2024

MERRY CHRISTMAS FROM PRAEH VIHEAR

Annual Christmas Eve Meditation from the Secret Place

Because of the tender mercy of our God



The Word became flesh

*"And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory,
the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth." — John 1:14*

Tuesday, December 24, 2024—The Secret Place, Preah Vihear, Cambodia

Dear Praying Friends,

Blessed Christmas Eve from The Secret Place,

As we at last enter into the last day of anticipation during this Advent Season, we must pause and prepare our hearts to contemplate the great paradox; The High King of Heaven has become flesh and came to live among us. As one poet pined, this was the miracle of God's "infinity dwindled to infancy".* In the midst of this busy season, we must again indeed pause to contemplate this mystery.

During this Advent season I have returned again and again to Zechariah's prophecy regarding his newborn son, John the Baptist (Luke 1:67-79). Zechariah doesn't just pray for his miracle son, but he prophesies over him. Particularly I have focused on verses 76-79.

*"And you, child, will be called the prophet of the Highest;
For you will go before the face of the Lord to prepare His ways,
To give knowledge of salvation to His people
By the remission of their sins, Through the tender mercy of our God,
With which the Dayspring from on high has visited us;
To give light to those who sit in darkness and the shadow of death,
To guide our feet into the way of peace."*



"Because of the tender mercy of our God...". Zechariah's wistful expression as he holds his newborn son stands in contrast to the harsh realities in our world today. As Pete Grieg writes, *"somewhere deep inside I think I'm craving simple kindness, gentleness and grace in a culture of such cynicism and offence. And this is how I want to be this Christmas; "compassionate and gracious, slow to anger, abounding in love (Psalm 103:8). Henri Nouwen puts it like this: a gentle person is "someone who treads lightly, listens carefully, looks tenderly, and touches with reverence. In our tough and often unbending world... our gentleness can be a vivid reminder of the presence of God among us," ** We long for His Kingdom to come.*

A Christmas Eve prayer from Lectio 365

*Jesus, I yield to the tenderness of your mercy, and the winsomeness of your love today. Thank you that there is always more grace in you than sin in me, more affection in your heart than affliction in mine, and that you somehow believe in me more than I believe in you.***

Have a blessed Christmas! *Joel*

* Gerard Manley Hopkins, from his poem "The Blessed Virgin"

** Lectio 365, Meditation for December 23, 2024 (Download the app: [Lectio 365 - 24-7 Prayer International](#))

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