

Advent Study: Road Trip

Week #4

Introduction

Can you believe it? We're entering the final stretch of our Advent Road Trip series. Over the past few weeks, we've packed our bags, asked "Are We There Yet?", and navigated the roadblocks on our journey.

We're approaching our destination. This is about the time you keep your eyes peeled for your exit, signaling that you've nearly made it to the end. Those exit signs bring a sense of relief and excitement that rivals the initial excitement we feel at the beginning of a trip.

In Luke 1:26-38, the angel Gabriel visits Mary, offering her the most profound exit sign: the promise of Christ's arrival into the world. It's the moment where the anticipation meets reality.

As we get closer to celebrating Jesus' birth, let's remember that his arrival brings us the hope and strength to carry on, no matter the burdens we bear.

This final week of the series, we can celebrate being Almost There!

Illustration Video

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jPeLYbi5ZvM>

In the classic 1939 film *The Wizard of Oz*, after facing numerous challenges and adventures on the Yellow Brick Road, Dorothy and her companions finally catch sight of the Emerald City in the distance. The city is a beacon of hope, and the destination where all their wishes are expected to come true. The sight of the gleaming city fills them with anticipation and the reassurance that they are "almost there."

Video Discussion Questions

1. What is your immediate recollection to this popular film? What memories come to mind when you think of this film and when you see this clip?
2. Dorothy and her three companions have already endured an exciting and challenging journey. Even as they sing their way along the yellow brick road, do you think their moods are high? Do you think they are anticipating a short journey or long journey? What do you think they must have been feeling just before catching their first glimpse of the Emerald City?

3. How do you think they felt *actually seeing* the Emerald City? Is it close or far away? What do they do in that moment?
4. Consider a time that you've been on some kind of journey, whether that was physical or emotional or spiritual. When you saw the proverbial light at the end of the tunnel, what was your reaction? How did you feel and what did you do?
5. As we look toward Christmas Eve and Christmas Day, what are you feeling? What do you think you might be feeling when you arrive at Christmas Eve or Christmas Day?

Scripture: Luke 1:26-38 (NRSV)

²⁶In the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent by God to a town in Galilee called Nazareth, ²⁷to a virgin engaged to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David. The virgin's name was Mary. ²⁸And he came to her and said, "Greetings, favored one! The Lord is with you." ²⁹But she was much perplexed by his words and pondered what sort of greeting this might be. ³⁰The angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. ³¹And now, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you will name him Jesus. ³²He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High, and the Lord God will give to him the throne of his ancestor David. ³³He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end." ³⁴Mary said to the angel, "How can this be, since I am a virgin?" ³⁵The angel said to her, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore the child to be born will be holy; he will be called Son of God. ³⁶And now, your relative Elizabeth in her old age has also conceived a son, and this is the sixth month for her who was said to be barren. ³⁷For nothing will be impossible with God." ³⁸Then Mary said, "Here am I, the servant of the Lord; let it be with me according to your word." Then the angel departed from her.

Scripture Discussion Questions

1. Gabriel said many marvelous things to Mary. He started with "Greetings favored one! The Lord is with you." He ended with "For nothing will be impossible with God." (Luke 1:28, 37). Our understanding of grace declares that God says this to all of us if we could just hear it. In what ways do you see with assurance that God holds you in favor? That God is with you? That God interacts with you? (*If this seems difficult or impossible to conceive, perhaps a prayer partner might work with you to build up such assurance.*) Have you seen evidence that "nothing is impossible with God"? How do you see yourself as God's partner to make good and faithful things happen?
2. When Mary, barely more than a child, was visited by Gabriel, she was initially perplexed by what he said (and no wonder!). He told her what must have seemed utterly fantastic: a birth (though she's a virgin) of a son of God Most High, who would have a throne like unto David and an eternal kingdom. But

almost immediately (assuming the conversation was as brief as reported), Mary said, “OK. As you wish” (Luke 1:26-38). Imagine yourself in that setting. Could you come to a point of obedience with a fantastic work of God so quickly (or at all)? Do you see yourself questioning? Arguing? Debating? Refusing?

3. Mary obviously caught on quickly, especially with reinforcement from Elizabeth (1:39-45). She sings what we call the Magnificat (1:47-55). Play a musical version of this song (such as this one from St. Luke’s Central Music: [My Soul Magnifies the Lord - YouTube](#)). List all the elements of acclamation. Then, along with a partner, write your own psalm of praise, based on what you see here, but also from your own experience of God.

Weekly Action

This guide will be published less than a week before Christmas Eve, and those who don’t see it until that morning have only a few hours until the evening services. It is with this in mind that we invite you to simply take time in silence (or at least quiet). Simply wait. Listen for God’s voice, and wait quietly. Consider that you are waiting for something—indeed, *someone*—of utmost importance: Emmanuel, which means God With Us. Be patient! You’re almost there.

Prayer

God of the heavens,

As we draw near to the end of our Advent journey, our hearts pulse with anticipation and hope. The roads we’ve traveled, the detours faced, have all led us to this moment, where the promise of Christ’s arrival shines brighter than ever.

Lord, we thank you for being our constant companion, guiding us through every twist and turn. As the signs of Your promise grow clearer, may our spirits be lifted, our faith strengthened, and our joy renewed.

In these final moments of waiting, fill us with a deep sense of gratitude and peace. Let us cherish the steps we’ve taken and the lessons learned, knowing that every moment has been a step closer to Your wondrous gift.

As we stand on the threshold of celebrating Jesus’ birth, prepare our hearts to receive him anew, to be transformed by his love, and to share that love with the world.

In the name of the soon-to-be-born Savior, Jesus Christ, we pray, Amen.