

## Are You Ready?



It is Christmas week. Are you ready? Usually when we hear that question, we expect a conversation about the status of decorating, baking, travel plans, and gift making/buying. However, as followers of Jesus, the question should call forth a different conversation. Are you ready for the coming of Christ into the world and, more importantly, into your life? Unlike, with the Christmas decorations, the coming of Jesus is *not* something that can be put back in a box by January 1<sup>st</sup> and stored away till next year! It is not 'over' in a day or two like the family gathering, or digested and forgotten like the Christmas meal. It is an ongoing challenge and opportunity to call forth the best that you are capable of and begin anew to live life as God calls you to.

Though we may consider it during Lent, many of us do not think of Advent as a time for taking stock and putting our spiritual house in order. During Advent, it is easy to get caught up in answering that other 'are you ready' question about trappings and trimmings. However, taking stock may be the best gift you can both get and give this Christmas.

It was a long time before those who witnessed the birth of that special baby in Bethlehem realized what it meant. Some of them never did. Unlike those first witnesses, we have the luxury of knowing the rest of the story – that the manger lead to a cross. That Jesus has a calling to ministry *for each one of us!* (Ephesians 2:10, Colossians 1:10) However, just knowing is not understanding what it means. That requires prayer; taking time to read the Christmas story; *and* time to study what Jesus taught as recorded in the Sermon On the Mount (Matthew 5-7) as well as the work of living in community. Do not forget to take stock this year.

- ★ make time for prayer and Bible study
- ★ consider how you spend all your resources and your time
- ★ make time for relationships (even if you cannot do it in person) – spend time talking and listening to each other around the tree; share family stories; take the family with you to worship Christmas Eve (or other services scheduled while they are with you) as part of your family gathering
- ★ remember those in need both near and far – in prayer and with your resources as you can

The coming of the Christ Child was a world changing event those many years ago. It is up to each of us to keep it that way for those who come after us. Are YOU ready?

- **Rejoice! All 17 Christian Aid Ministries (CAM) missionaries, kidnapped in Haiti October 16<sup>th</sup> are now free!** 5 had been released. The last 12 escaped December 16<sup>th</sup>. (CAM is connected with Amish, conservative Mennonite, & conservative Brethren groups. CAM has partnered with the Church of the Brethren on some projects) Haiti has the world's highest kidnaping rate. Kidnapping for ransom is a growing problem in several countries. Whether any ransom was paid in this case is unclear.
- **Those dealing with COVID.** 1 of every 5 current Ohio hospital patients has COVID. Unvaccinated people are 10 times more likely to get COVID and 20 times more likely to die of it. Case numbers are growing worldwide at alarming rates. The U.S. is still the worst affected. Delta remains dominant, but Omicron is spreading fast. Pray for those trying to prevent it, cure it, & care for the sick. 37% of those who get COVID face long term symptoms. 1 of every 100 Americans over 65 has died of COVID. More than 800,000 have died in the U.S. alone.
- **Those affected by the December tornados.** The death toll now stands at 90 (78 died in Kentucky). Kentucky, was the worst hit, but Illinois, Tennessee, Missouri & Arkansas were hit too. Remember the thousands who have lost their homes, & whole towns severely damaged.
- **Afghanistan.** People are dying from starvation & preventable disease because the country has inept leadership, no resources, their assets are frozen, & international aid is not being sent.
- **The Philippians recovering from the devastation of Typhoon Rai.** 375 + people have died & there is extensive destruction.
- **The people of Myanmar (Burma)** New evidence of the torture & killing of civilians in villages by the military has been reported. In February, the military seized power from the elected government & continues waging a violent & brutal terror campaign against all who oppose them.

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