

ADVENT: WAITING WITH HOPE AND EXPECTATION

Fourth Sunday of Advent
December 20, 2009

Micah 5:2-5a
Luke 1:46b-55
or Psalm 80:1-7
Hebrews 10:5-10
Luke 1:39-45 [46-55]

Come, Sup with Me

Jesus' birth is all about God giving us his very best—his most precious gift, his only Son. In our natural selves and with our finite minds, we don't see it or comprehend it. But, for those of us who are searching for meaning and truth and connection, God doesn't leave us in our natural selves to founder. He allows the Holy Spirit to move within us to announce God's coming into our lives in the form of his Son.

I can just imagine Mary's exhilaration as she experienced the Spirit's presence when she visited Elizabeth. Her song of praise (Luke 1:46-55) is one of the most beautiful passages in the Bible. In my own life, I experienced the power of God's Spirit through Revelation 3:20. In the *King James Version* it reads most profoundly, "Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will *sup* with him, and he with me."

Many twentieth-century English translations of this Scripture use "dine" or "eat with" instead of the quaint "sup." For me, those updates lose the transcendent meaning that "sup" carries with it, in the sense that "supping" means so much more. It's more like communion, or a communication that includes sitting down one-on-one with a close friend to dinner, where you enjoy a long, endearing conversation and reveal intensely personal things and make a forever pact that includes meeting regularly like this for the rest of your lives. And this is what Jesus promises to do when you open the door.

Merriam-Webster's dictionary reveals additional shadings to the meaning of "sup," including "a mouthful, especially of a liquor or broth," either of which would warm the "sup-er." It can also mean "to take or drink in swallows or gulps," which you would do if you were very thirsty. Supper is also a more casual, accessible meal than dinner. These additional meanings add the sense that one is warmed, cared for, and deeply understood by Jesus—through the stirring of the Holy Spirit which brings to life the thirst-quenching Word of God in us.

So, God sends his only begotten Son, Jesus, to be born to a virgin and to live among us forever as the most precious gift we could ever have received. It starts with a knock and our willingness to open the door of our hearts. Amazing!

This week's Reflection was prepared by Liz Smith, who serves on the staff of the American Bible Society as Managing Editor of *The Record* magazine.

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This week we remember to pray for the work of the Bible Societies in: Burkina Faso – With thanks to God for the publication of the Jula Bible, and with prayers for the literacy and *Faith Comes By Hearing* programs, for the new Lyele and Gourma translation projects, and for the distribution of Scriptures to the TAZI audiences; **Benin** – With thanks to God for the launch of the Lokpa Bible, for revitalized relations between the Bible Society and Churches, and for peaceful elections and with prayers for lasting peace in the country, and with prayers for God's blessing on the Bible Society's translation, literacy, distribution, and *Faith Comes By Hearing* programs; **Togo** – With thanks to God for the launch of the Moba New Testament, for the Good Samaritan program and for the impact of the *Faith Comes By Hearing* program on prisoners, and with prayers for other translation projects, for closer collaboration with the Churches, and for the ability to recruit a new literacy program coordinator.

Activity Corner: "Waiting for Jesus with a Heart Filled with LOVE"

Supplies needed: Bible; Bible Concordance; small notebook or writing paper; pen/pencil.

The theme for the fourth week of Advent is LOVE. Look up the word LOVE in a Bible Concordance and then look up several Bibles passages that contain the word. How is love expressed in each passage? Consider keeping an Advent Journal to record your thoughts and reflections. At the end of the week, prepare a prayer that incorporates your thoughts. Share your prayer with members of your household during a time of family devotion.

Throughout the Advent season, gather with members of your household and reflect daily on Christ's Advent – his coming on Christmas as a baby in Bethlehem, his coming to you each day through the Holy Scriptures and prayer, and his promise to come again at the close of the age. The Bible readings for Advent remind us to remain alert and faithful as we prepare for and await our Lord's coming. If you are using an Advent Wreath, light all four candles prior to the Scripture reading for the day.

Sunday	Isaiah 9:2-7
Monday	1 Corinthians 13:1-13
Tuesday	1 John 3:1-24
Wednesday	1 John 4:7-21
Thursday	Luke 2:1-20
Friday	John 3:1-21
Saturday	Psalm 136

Conclude each day's reading with prayer and singing the first four verses of "O Come, O Come, Emmanuel" or one of your favorite Advent carols.