

WALKING WITH JESUS WHILE LISTENING

Matthew 1:18-20

December 21, 2019

The beginning of Jesus' journey on Earth is celebrated every December, when the northern realms of the planet experience their longest nights of the year. It's a cold time. Many plants lose their leaves and appear to the casual eye to be dead.

In the months before Jesus was born, it also seemed a desolate time. God had not spoken a word to any prophet — or layperson — for centuries, according to the "official" record. The Jewish state was under the control of far-off Rome, and monetary tribute was due each year to a foreign power.

In dark times like this, when people are tempted to accept defeat and despair as their new normal, God offers a divine intervention.

When Joseph found out about the pregnancy of his fiancée, Mary, his first choice was to "dismiss her quietly." He didn't want her to endure public disgrace.

Then, via an angel in a dream, came news that changed the course of history. In the midst of a family crisis with the potential for lasting shame and hurt, in a time of political humiliation for the Jewish people, the Lord's messenger told Joseph of the great news: The Holy Spirit is at work — in the form of a baby!

This day, in scientific calculations, is the Winter Solstice. We know, though, that the shortest day of the year, when the sunshine is weakest, will be followed by warmer, longer days, in which trees and flowers will "come back to life."

Those who walked with Jesus, and listened closely, would have heard his promise. Despite doubters, persecution, and ultimately crucifixion, the power of Almighty God is victorious over desolate times. We still need to hear that, and to re-hear that, and to believe it and to share it — not only at Christmas but for the following 52 weeks.

Prayer: Dear Jesus, You brought light and warmth to a cold and dark world. In your almighty power, help me to shine so as to help dispel the darkness in our world. Amen.

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