



Las Posadas Christmas Reflection

During the weeks we prepare for Christmas, we invite you into a time of reflection as we anticipate the birth of Christ. Each week follows the sermon and encourages you to think more deeply about how we welcome the stranger into our lives. We pray this deepens your faith this Christmas season.

Week 1 (December 1): The Stranger

Matthew 25: 31-40 recounts the words of Christ when asked to explain the final judgment. It's pretty simple; if you've welcomed the stranger in any way, you are welcomed into his eternal kingdom. Jesus offers specific ways to welcome the stranger: giving food and drink to the hungry and thirsty, extending welcome to a stranger, clothing the naked, visiting the sick and imprisoned. What might this look like today?

- Recall a time when you have welcomed the stranger.
- How did it make you feel?
- Were you more blessed than the stranger?
- If you can't recall a specific time when you've welcomed a stranger, is there something specific you can do to encounter a stranger in a meaningful way?

Week 2 (December 8): The Enemy

Matthew 5: 43-48 relays the words of Jesus when he speaks about loving our enemies. He says it's easy to love people like us--even "sinners" do that! He is calling to intentionally love someone who is our enemy. Someone we disagree with. Someone whose actions we abhor. Someone who wants to harm us. Someone who has hurt us. Of course, he would never condone tolerating someone who abuses us, but how often do we engage our "enemies?" How might our hearts change if we actually loved our enemies?

- In a world where it is so easy just to filter the world according to our viewpoints, how have you deliberately tried to hear the perspective of your enemy?
- Have you ever had the opportunity to extend kindness to someone you just don't like and would prefer to avoid?

Week 3 (December 15): The Foreigner

Galatians 3: 19-29 These words of Paul would have shocked his listeners. No Jew or Greek? No slave nor free? Male nor female? We are all equal before God? Maybe it shocks today's audience as well, in a world that often operates in an us vs. them mentality. Without getting political, how do we welcome the foreigner? How often do we actually encounter foreigners in our daily life? Some of us have more opportunities than others to interact with those from different cultures. But when such an opportunity occurs, what will our posture be?

- Recall a time when you welcomed a "foreigner."
- Did you learn something new and/or surprising?
- Have you ever thought of yourself as a foreigner?

Week 4: (December 22): The Poor

In the passage from 1 John, John challenges his audience to put love into action. Love is more than words; in fact, if our actions don't match our words, is our love real? It's no secret that Christmas is a time of heightened help to the poor. We put an extra buck in the kettle, pick an Angel off the Angel Tree, or make an extra donation to our favorite charity. Unfortunately, the poor need help year-round. Is giving food to the food pantry the same as feeding the hungry? Or does Jesus call us to a deeper relationship with the stranger? What would it look like to take our charity beyond December and extend it into the new year?

- Have you ever been on the receiving end of help? How did this experience make you feel?
- In what specific ways will you and your family put love into action this Christmas? Into the new year?
- How might loving the poor disrupt your life?

Christmas Eve: (December 24): Jesus

The packages are wrapped, the cookies baked. Now we wait. Wait for what? Little kids wait for Christmas morning. But when we're older, is the magic gone? Of course not! This is the night heaven came down. The eternal became flesh, taking on the fullness of humanity with all the joy, pain, and suffering that comes with it. This is the night hope is born, literally in the stable and figuratively in our heart. And when Christ lives in our hearts, we can carry Christmas all year round.

May 2020 be the year we welcome the stranger, love our enemies, embrace the foreigner, serve the poor, and ultimately, live like Christ.

Merry Christmas.

