



## Grain

“The name of this infinite and inexhaustible depth and ground of all being is God.” –Paul Tillich

## Field

<sup>18</sup>Now the birth of Jesus the Messiah took place in this way. When his mother Mary had been engaged to Joseph, but before they lived together, she was found to be with child from the Holy Spirit. <sup>19</sup>Her husband Joseph, being a righteous man and unwilling to expose her to public disgrace, planned to dismiss her quietly. <sup>20</sup>But just when he had resolved to do this, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, “Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary as your wife, for the child conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. <sup>21</sup>She will bear a son, and you are to name him Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins.” <sup>22</sup>All this took place to fulfill what had been spoken by the Lord through the prophet: <sup>23</sup>“Look, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and they shall name him Emmanuel,” which means, “God is with us.” <sup>24</sup>When Joseph awoke from sleep, he did as the angel of the Lord commanded him; he took her as his wife, <sup>25</sup>but had no marital relations with her until she had borne a son; and he named him Jesus. Matthew 1:18-25

## Thoughts

Our Gospel writer’s vision is immersed in the reality of Emmanuel, which means God is with us, and describes who Jesus would be. God was with Mary and Joseph during their tumultuous start as a family within a beautiful and troubled land.

Several years ago, I was able to visit a couple of friends in the Holy Land. Israel was filled with startling scenes that were constant reminders of conflict and inequities. Even on Christmas Eve in Bethlehem, soldiers surrounded the area, as they did when Jesus was born. In the first century, the soldiers were Roman instead of Israeli. In a setting of societal threats, outside the structures of wealth or even the comfort of a home and familiar community, Jesus was born.

The holy family also experienced internal turmoil; so much could have gone wrong. Joseph, as a male, could have made a spectacle out of his betrothed for being pregnant by someone else, leading to her being stoned to death. Joseph resigned to divorcing her quietly. But he wasn’t only a righteous person who followed the law and acted fairly, he responded to God’s presence. Joseph listened to what he didn’t fully understand about how God was leading him. His path with Mary turned out to be about a larger history and a deeper part of who he was.

Just as Joseph needed to make a decision about whether to stay with Mary or to leave, within our particular contexts as a part of groups with varying degrees of privilege, we decide how we will respond to God’s presence. When do we stay? What or whom do we need to leave? The Christmas story ignites in us the possibilities of not only what we can legally do or what privilege allows us to get away with, but how we are drawn into the ground of our being. We are part of a holy history in our personal and public lives. God is with us. Happy Monday!

## Share

Send any quotes you'd like to share with our network to [cynthia.crane@elca.org](mailto:cynthia.crane@elca.org)

All Monday Quotes found under the Resources & Advocacy Tools tab at [www.loppw.org](http://www.loppw.org)

Many blessings upon you,

Pastor Cindy