



Merry Christmas Abundant Life Tres Dias Community!

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Our Savior is born!

This December of 2021 newsletter includes:

- A Christmas Message
- A note about Paying it Forward
- A word from our weekend #44 Rectora

A Christmas Message

by **Matt Mouzakis**

Merry Christmas ALTD Community!

I pray that you and your families are well and blessed during this Christmas season.

I've been reflecting on peace lately, especially because we are living in times where there seems to be no peace in this world. People are worried, offended, or caving into a spirit of fear over a lot of things these days. The things that the world claims will bring us peace actually leave us empty. When Jesus was born it was much of the same thing, a time with no peace in Israel...

Israel was under Roman rule. The emperor Caesar Augustus has called for the census in order to raise taxes but also out of pride to see how big his empire was, this is why Joseph and Mary had gone to Bethlehem. Rome's message was that they brought peace to the world through war and violence and the conquering of all the nations. This peace was only upheld through Rome's brutality and tyranny and those who opposed this kingdom got killed, usually crucified.

Shortly before the birth of Jesus, Caesar Augustus' birthday became a celebration of Rome's peace, and there was a royal announcement sent out to the whole Roman world called the Priene inscription which stated (paraphrased): **Good Tidings of great joy- Augustus, the savior of the world, has made all wars cease and has brought order and peace to the world. On this, Caesar's birthday, our god has signaled the beginning of the gospel (good news) to all the world because of him.**

Sounds familiar...

Luke 2:8-14 ⁸ *And there were shepherds living out in the fields nearby, keeping watch over their flocks at night.* ⁹ *An angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified.* ¹⁰ *But the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid. I bring you good news that will cause great joy for all the people.* ¹¹ *Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is the Messiah, the Lord.* ¹² *This will be a sign to you: You will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger."* ¹³ *Suddenly a great company of the heavenly host appeared with the angel, praising God and saying,* ¹⁴ *"Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace to those on whom his favor rests."*

The angels are countering Caesar's good news with the good news of the true King coming into the world; God taking on human flesh! Both proclamations begin it with "euangelion", good news (gospel) or good tidings (the word we also get evangelism from). A gospel announcement in the ancient world was a royal good news proclamation of a king usually accompanied by their accomplishments! Both announcements are about a saving king, both announcements center around a birth, and what that birth brings to the world.

Caesar "saved" and brought peace, the *Pax Romana*, by conquering others through violence and war, tyranny and militarism; by crushing his enemies and by instilling fear in the citizens through threats of death. The *Reg Gestae Divi Augustus* (*The deeds of the divine Augustus*) was a collection of writings that talked about Augustus' 3 censuses, all his war conquests, and how he crushed all his enemies to bring peace to the world. Power over kingdom was the way of the Caesars.

Jesus conquers and brings peace in a way that is upside down to this world's ways. He brought it through love, service, and giving up his life for his enemies: a power under kingdom. When Jesus began his ministry, he announces this about his deeds (*Reg Gestae Jesus*- the deeds of Jesus):

Luke 4:18-19

¹⁸ *"The Spirit of the Lord is on me,
because he has anointed me
to proclaim good news to the poor.
He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners
and recovery of sight for the blind,
to set the oppressed free,
¹⁹ to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor."*

Peace is something we have in Jesus ...

Through Jesus we have peace with God through the reconciling work of the cross (ironically Caesar's instrument of death and display of power by crucifying his enemies became Jesus' enthronement) (Romans 5:1).

Jesus brought peace because He came to defeat death, the Enemy, and our fear of death. (The Caesars only had death in their wake) (Heb 2:14-18)

We can have peace with others because Jesus taught us the way of peace and calls us to this way of life. As Christians we are called to live the way he lived: a life of giving of ourselves. (Phil 2:1-11)

His Gospel is peace: His royal announcement contains peace as its benefit to us. When we respond with allegiance to his gospel and kingship, we take our place in a kingdom that brings actual peace.

Eph 2:17

¹⁷ He (Jesus) came and preached peace to you who were far away and peace to those who were near.

Acts 10:36

³⁶ You know the message God sent to the people of Israel, announcing the good news of peace through Jesus Christ, who is Lord (King) of all.

As we have seen in the historical context of the Christmas story that Jesus entered history in a time where there was no true peace in order to bring His peace. Today it seems like we are in times of no peace, but I tell you come to Jesus, and you can experience peace, we have access through Jesus to this peace.

This Christmas we have a choice of which king we will find our peace in; the metaphorical Caesar, representing the ways, worries, and things of this world or Jesus? The enemy is communicating the same message as Caesar- that he can bring peace through the ways of this world, but the enemy really only comes to kill and destroy (John 10:10) but true peace can be found in Jesus who came to bring us life-true life abundantly.

The Angel's announcement made to the shepherds is to be "great joy to ALL PEOPLE" ... that means us too... In times where there seems to be no peace the prince of peace has broken in!

John 14:27 *²⁷ Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid.*

If you are struggling to know this peace found in Jesus, maybe be like the shepherds who said, "Let's go to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened, which we

have been told about.” Come to Jesus and see. If you do know about this peace, celebrate it as the shepherds did after they heard this good news:

Luke 2:15,18-20

When they had seen him, they spread the word concerning what had been told them about this child, ¹⁸ and all who heard it were amazed at what the shepherds said to them. ²⁰ The shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all the things they had heard and seen, which were just as they had been told.

This Christmas spread the word and glorify God because you have experienced this peace. The best way you can do this is by living it out and bearing His light!

Merry Christmas!

Pastor Matt Mouzakis



PAY IT FORWARD

by **David May**

What is it? - Pay it Forward is a program set up to cover the cost of weekends for candidates. No sponsor should avoid asking a participant because they cannot afford the weekend fee. The goal is to not ask participants for any money in order to attend a weekend

Why is it important - This is one more way for the community to demonstrate Gods love. By not asking Potential participants to come up with the money. We take away one excuse

if they are on the fence and looking for a way to say no. The weekend should be a gift to the participants. This will also make them more likely to help pay for future participants.

How it works - If you are sponsoring a participant. You should tell the potential participant what the cost of the weekend is. But as a gift, someone else has covered it for them. As the sponsor, you should then pay as much as you are able. If you can afford their entire fee, that is great, because it does not deplete the fund. But pay whatever you can. If everyone uses it for the full weekend fee for every participant they sponsor the funds will run out and there will be no future financial aid. The fund is there to make sure no one avoids asking a participant because of their current financial situation.

How do we keep it going? - The fund is not unlimited and when the money runs out, there will be no financial help for anyone. By donating to Pay it Forward, you can help keep it going. One time donations are welcome, but recurring donations are what really keeps the program going. If every person that serves on the next weekend signs up for \$5.00 a month. Over the next year, they would cover the cost of 20 participants. Imagine if 25% of the ALTD community signed up for \$5.00/a month. That is the price of 1 fancy coffee. At that giving rate, ALTD could support all candidates without asking sponsors for any money.

How do you sign up? It's easy, text ALTD to 1-206-859-9405 and follow the prompts. It takes less than 5 minutes. Or go to the ALTD website <https://rockfordaltd.webs.com/> and click on the Pay it Forward link at the bottom of the home page. Think how much your weekend meant to you. Is it worth \$5.00/month to share that gift with someone else?

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Coming March 24th - 27th 2022!

by **Jenny Mac Intrye - WOMEN'S WEEKEND #44 RECTORA**

Merry Christmas ALTD community! What a beautiful time of year it is. I feel the joy of the season overflowing into the planning process for the next women's weekend #44. It is exciting for me to FINALLY see ideas turn into plans for the weekend.

Our weekend verse is Romans 12:2 "Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is-his good, pleasing and perfect will." The Lord is highlighting to me the importance of standing on His word, speaking His word, thinking His word, and living His word. Knowing His living word is the blueprint to knowing His will and transforming our lives. I am so excited to see what the Lord has in store for weekend 44!

READ MORE ON OUR WEBSITE
<https://www.abundantlifetresdias.org/>

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