

Week I: Rooted

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Bible Verse: Zechariah 9:9–10

"Rejoice greatly, Daughter Zion!

Shout, Daughter Jerusalem!

See, your king comes to you,

righteous and victorious,

lowly and riding on a donkey,

on a colt, the foal of a donkey."



**Member of Christmas Lutheran
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Devotion

Advent is a season of waiting. We wait for light in a time when the world often feels engulfed in darkness. Here in Palestine, we wait for an end to injustice. But this is not the first time our people have waited under the shadow of military power. Over two thousand years ago, Mary and Joseph made a long, difficult journey through this same land, also under the rule of an occupying empire.

The prophets foretold the coming of a Savior — righteous and victorious — who would deliver the people from oppression. But the Savior did not come with weapons or armies. He came into the world in a manger. And the first to hear the news were not rulers or scholars but humble shepherds.

At that time, shepherds were marginalized — considered unclean; their work was lowly and rough. But the angels appeared to them, and they became the first messengers of hope. It is no accident that they were entrusted with this holy message. The shepherds were people of the land. Their feet were rooted in the soil, their lives in tune with the earth and its rhythms. Their place in the Christmas story reflects a deep truth: that God chooses the lowly, the rooted, the overlooked, to be vessels of revelation.

My family holds that same witness today. As Palestinian Christians, we have borne this faith since Pentecost. We remain steadfast, not by returning hate for hate but by refusing to be enemies — even when our humanity is denied by military occupation or our Tent of Nations farm is threatened with confiscation.

We are not owners of the land; we are its stewards. This land has been passed down through generations, and we care for it not merely as property but as a sacred trust. Our trees, our soil and our roots are part of our Christian and Palestinian identity.

When settlers burn or uproot olive groves, this is more than a physical loss — it wounds our hearts and scars the land. Yet we answer destruction by replanting. Every tree they destroy, we replace. We believe that, as with the olive tree, roots must grow deep before fruit can appear. For the first years,

growth is hidden, silent, invisible. But it is essential. So too with our mission. We root ourselves today in order to be fruitful tomorrow.

This is our form of resistance: to love the land, to nourish the soil, to cultivate hope. These are not passive acts. They are bold expressions of faith. To plant an olive tree in the face of violence is to declare that life is stronger than death and love more powerful than hate.

The prophecy of Zechariah reminds us that justice is coming — but not through power and might. It comes humbly, riding on a donkey. It comes through the work of shepherds and farmers, children and mothers. It comes through those who wait with hope and act with love.

This is the spirit of Advent in Palestine. We wait — not in despair but with faith. We wait, and we work for the day when justice does not come charging on a warhorse but walks humbly, like Christ, through the gates of Jerusalem. It will come through the cry of a child in a manger and through the message of a shepherd.



Prayer from an ELCJHL Young Adult

God of Hope, We wait in silence, in longing, and in prayer. The nights are long, the pain is deep, yet your promise still whispers:

"The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light."

Lord, we confess our fears. We fear for our future, we fear that peace will never come. But we also confess our faith that you are the God who keeps promises, that you are the God who draws near.

Lord, in this Advent, we are waiting for justice to roll down like waters. We are waiting for every tear to be wiped away. We are waiting for the day when You will make all things new. Until that day, keep us steadfast in hope. Make us builders of peace in a world of conflict. Come Lord Jesus, be born again in our hearts, in our land, and in our world.

To you belongs all glory, honor, and power.

Now and forever,

Amen

-Lubna



Discussion Questions

1. **What's one emotion you felt when listening to this devotion?**
2. **Who might be the “shepherds” in our society today, who are considered “unclean” and “lowly” but in fact carry an important message?**
3. **What is the difference between “owning” and “stewarding”?**
4. **How is the Nassar family refusing hate? How can we refuse hate, both toward ourselves but also to our neighbors under occupation and other systems of oppression?**
5. **In what (and/or who) do you root your faith?**
6. **How can we plant olive trees in the face of injustice?**