DAY 13

LUKE 2:1–5

In those days Caesar Augustus issued a decree that a census should be taken of the entire Roman world. (This was the first census that took place while Quirinius was governor of Syria.) And everyone went to their own town to register.

So Joseph also went up from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to Judea, to Bethlehem the town of David, because he belonged to the house and line of David. He went there to register with Mary, who was pledged to be married to him and was expecting a child.

These five verses set the stage for the birth of Jesus. Mary and Joseph were leaving Nazareth and going to Bethlehem. Why? Caesar had ordered a census that required citizens to go to their hometown to register. Since Joseph was from King David's family, Bethlehem was his ancestral hometown.

What do these five verses not tell us? As a woman at this time in history, Mary would not be counted in the census, so why was she traveling with Joseph this late in pregnancy? Was Joseph trying to get Mary away from the town gossips in Nazareth? Were Mary and Joseph moving to Bethlehem permanently? (We know from Matthew's Gospel that the family was still in Bethlehem when the Magi visited, perhaps as much as two years after the birth.) Were Mary and Joseph scared?

Throughout her pregnancy and especially as she grew closer to giving birth, Mary likely thought that her mother and other women in her family would be with her at the birth of her child. This trip to Bethlehem removed that option. Have you ever had your plans upset by the decisions of someone else, decisions that you could not ignore? How did you experience God during that time? Did you blame Him or turn to Him for guidance? It's an amazing thing to think about the circumstances surrounding King Jesus' birth and the humble, lowly way He entered into our world. He didn't do it surrounded by a crowd of people or in a palace; He came quietly into an unassuming town called Bethlehem.

REFLECT

Our ancestors help shape and define us. Joseph came from the line of King David—when you think about your family heritage, what comes to mind? Do you have a strong legacy of faith or are you starting new traditions? What does it mean for you to be a part of the family of God?

PRAY

King Jesus, regardless of our family lineage, help us to remember that we are children of God. Even when circumstances are dictated by others or when my plans are changed, help me to remember that you, Immanuel, are with me and at work in all circumstances to bring glory and honor to God. Draw near to me this Advent. Amen.