

A Not so Wonderful Life -  
December 1, 2024

As you join this discussion, let the Holy Spirit guide you. Share your thoughts and reflect on the message. Work through the guide by reading Scripture and answering a few questions.

### **Open Up Together:**

- How do you think ancient Roman citizens would view our modern idea of peace compared to theirs?

### **Read Together:**

#### **Luke 1:5 & 2:1**

*In the time of **Herod, king of Judea**....In those days **Caesar Augustus** issued a decree that a census should be taken of the entire **Roman world**.*

#### **2 Kings 17:7 & 19-20**

*All this took place because **the Israelites had sinned against the Lord their God**, who had brought them up out of Egypt from under the power of Pharaoh king of Egypt. They worshiped other gods.....and **even Judah did not keep the commands of the Lord their God**. They followed the practices Israel had introduced. Therefore the Lord rejected all the people of Israel; he afflicted them and **gave them into the hands of plunderers**, until he thrust them from his presence.*

#### **Ezekiel 36:24-26**

*"For I will take you out of the nations; **I will gather you from all the countries and bring you back into your own land**. I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you will be clean; **I will cleanse you from all your impurities** and from all your idols. I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit in you; I will remove from you your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh.*

#### **Luke 1:30-33**

*But the angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary; you have found favor with God. You will conceive and give birth to a son, and **you are to call him Jesus**. He will be great and will be called the **Son of the Most High**. The Lord God will give him **the throne of his father David, and he will reign** over Jacob's descendants forever; **his kingdom will never end**."*

### **Matthew 1:20-21**

...an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, "Joseph son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary home as your wife, because what is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. She will give birth to a son, and you are to **give him the name Jesus**, because **he will save his people from their sins.**"

### **John 1:9-11**

The true light that gives light to everyone was coming into the world. He was in the world, and though the world was made through him, **the world did not recognize him**. He came to that which was his own, but **his own did not receive him**.

### **John 1:12-13**

**Yet to all who did receive him**, to those who believed in his name, **he gave the right to become children of God**— children born not of natural descent, nor of human decision or a husband's will, but **born of God**.

### **Matthew 16:24**

Then Jesus said to his disciples, "Whoever wants to be my disciple must **deny themselves** and take up their cross and follow me.

### **Matthew 16:25**

For whoever wants to save their life will lose it, but **whoever loses their life for me will find it**.

### **Discuss Together:**

- What does peace mean to you?
- What do you believe is the difference between the peace Jesus brought and the peace the Romans promised?
- What does it mean to see Jesus as a "disruption" in your life, and how might that be both challenging and rewarding?
- What is one thing in your life you might need to "deny" or let go of to follow Jesus more fully.

- How can taking a small step toward self-denial lead to a more profound change in your life?

**Pray Together:**

Reflect on how Jesus might call you to embrace disruption in your life. Pray for God to reveal what you might need to release—habits, comforts, or fears—that keep you from living fully for Him. Pray for courage to take that first small step toward self-denial and trust in the life-changing power of following Jesus.