

# 2020 Advent Guide



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## ***Week 1***

## **Monday, November 30th**

### **Scripture: Luke 1:46-55**

*46 And Mary said, "My soul magnifies the Lord, 47 and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior, 48 for he has looked on the humble estate of his servant. For behold, from now on all generations will call me blessed; 49 for he who is mighty has done great things for me, and holy is his name. 50 And his mercy is for those who fear him from generation to generation. 51 He has shown strength with his arm; he has scattered the proud in the thoughts of their hearts; 52 he has brought down the mighty from their thrones and exalted those of humble estate; 53 he has filled the hungry with good things, and the rich he has sent away empty. 54 He has helped his servant Israel, in remembrance of his mercy, 55 as he spoke to our fathers, to Abraham and to his offspring forever."*

### **Summary:**

One of the most shocking aspects of the Christmas story is the character God chooses to use to accomplish His purposes. He could have chosen kings and queens, the rich and the well-established, but instead he chose a carpenter and his betrothed. Here is Mary, a young virgin woman from the off-the-beaten-path town of Nazareth - unsuspecting and unassuming - whom God chooses to give birth to His Son, the promised and long-awaited Messiah.

No wonder Mary's response to the arrival of the angel and to her unexpected pregnancy is to remark on how the Lord chooses the humble. He truly has "brought down the mighty from their thrones and exalted those of humble estate." God uses the humble and the lowly to bring about His Kingdom. This was true 2,000 years ago with Mary and is still true for us today - God accomplishes his purposes and will through those who are humble in heart.

### **Questions:**

1. What stood out to you from today's reading?
2. How is the fact that "God uses the humble and and the lowly to bring about His Kingdom" good news for you today?
3. How can you grow in humility as you consider Jesus this week?

## **Tuesday, December 1st**

### **Scripture: Luke 1:46-47, Psalm 34:1-3**

*46 And Mary said, "My soul magnifies the Lord, 47 and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior."*

*1 I will bless the Lord at all times; his praise shall continually be in my mouth. 2 My soul makes its boast in the Lord; let the humble hear and be glad. 3 Oh, magnify the Lord with me, and let us exalt his name together!*

### **Summary:**

Mary's song in Luke 1 echoes the refrain of the Psalmist David in Psalm 34. The Lord is great and has done great things and their response is to "magnify the Lord" and rejoice in Him.

God has truly done great things. His greatest gift of all is seen so clearly in this advent season. While we were enemies of God, separated from Him - He sent His Son Jesus, born of a woman, to take on flesh and enter into humanity. What an undeserving gift of grace we celebrate at Christmas! When we think about what God has done, may we be driven to deeper and deeper joy, worship, and exaltation of Him.

### **Questions:**

1. What stood out to you from today's reading?
  
2. Take a few minutes to listen to "He Who is Mighty" by Sovereign Grace Music (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Jbo3tjoazww>). Allow the song to lift your soul and magnify the Lord. As you meditate on the lyrics, write down anything the Holy Spirit prompts you with.

## **Wednesday, December 2nd**

### **Scripture: Luke 1:49, 1 Peter 2:22-25**

49 "For he who is mighty has done great things for me, and holy is his name."

22 He committed no sin, neither was deceit found in his mouth. 23 When he was reviled, he did not revile in return; when he suffered, he did not threaten, but continued entrusting himself to him who judges justly. 24 He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, that we might die to sin and live to righteousness. By his wounds you have been healed. 25 For you were straying like sheep, but have now returned to the Shepherd and Overseer of your souls.

### **Summary:**

Jesus was holy. Think about that for a second. Jesus, the Son of God who was fully God, became fully man. The Bible says He was tempted like you and I were. He faced trials and suffering like you and I do. He was familiar with weakness, so much so that Hebrews says He is able to sympathize with us in our weaknesses because of what He faced. And yet, unlike us - Jesus was holy. He never said "yes" to sin. He never gave into temptation. He never faltered from God's will. He always did exactly what was in step with God's design.

This is part of why Jesus could be the perfect and ultimate sacrifice. Our sins needed a spotless, without blemish lamb to die. And that is what Jesus became. Jesus lived the life we could not live, and yet he died the death that we and our sins deserved on the cross. Jesus, the Bible says, knew no sin and yet *became* sin for us so that by his wounds and suffering and shed blood we could be healed and reconciled to God. This is Jesus, born of a woman on Christmas day.

### **Questions:**

1. What stood out to you from today's reading?
2. What are the ways you see unholiness show up in your life? Are there any specific sins you need to spend time repenting to God for today?
3. Take a few minutes to pray and thank Jesus for being your perfect sacrifice who was wounded so you could be healed.

## **Thursday, December 3rd**

### **Scripture: Luke 1:50, Psalm 111**

*50 And his mercy is for those who fear him from generation to generation.*

*1 Praise the Lord! I will give thanks to the Lord with my whole heart, in the company of the upright, in the congregation. 2 Great are the works of the Lord, studied by all who delight in them. 3 Full of splendor and majesty is his work, and his righteousness endures forever. 4 He has caused his wondrous works to be remembered; the Lord is gracious and merciful. 5 He provides food for those who fear him; he remembers his covenant forever. 6 He has shown his people the power of his works, in giving them the inheritance of the nations. 7 The works of his hands are faithful and just; all his precepts are trustworthy; 8 they are established forever and ever, to be performed with faithfulness and uprightness. 9 He sent redemption to his people; he has commanded his covenant forever. Holy and awesome is his name! 10 The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom; all those who practice it have a good understanding. His praise endures forever!*

### **Summary:**

Mary had much to be afraid of at this point in her life. An angel has just appeared to her telling her she will give birth to a son who is the Messiah, even though she's a virgin. She must travel away from her home. What will all of this mean for her reputation? Her social standing? Her future? Her life?

And yet Mary had a deeper fear than just the earthly fear of her circumstances. She had a fear of God. Not a "run away" type of fear, but a deep and abiding awe. She reminded herself - God's mercy is for those who fear Him. God's mercy and wisdom and might is for those who want to see God glorified and worshipped and lifted high above all creation. For those who fear Him, more than they fear man. God remembers His covenant love for His people, and all those who stand in awe, amazement, and fear of Him find mercy and grace.

### **Questions:**

1. What stood out to you from today's reading?
2. How do you need to grow in healthy "fear" of God?
3. How would your life look if you learned to fear God more than other people?

## **Friday, December 4th**

### **Scripture: Luke 1:54-55, Genesis 17:1-8**

*54 He has helped his servant Israel, in remembrance of his mercy, 55 as he spoke to our fathers, to Abraham and to his offspring forever."*

*1 When Abram was ninety-nine years old the Lord appeared to Abram and said to him, "I am God Almighty; walk before me, and be blameless, 2 that I may make my covenant between me and you, and may multiply you greatly." 3 Then Abram fell on his face. And God said to him, 4 "Behold, my covenant is with you, and you shall be the father of a multitude of nations. 5 No longer shall your name be called Abram, but your name shall be Abraham, for I have made you the father of a multitude of nations. 6 I will make you exceedingly fruitful, and I will make you into nations, and kings shall come from you. 7 And I will establish my covenant between me and you and your offspring after you throughout their generations for an everlasting covenant, to be God to you and to your offspring after you. 8 And I will give to you and to your offspring after you the land of your sojournings, all the land of Canaan, for an everlasting possession, and I will be their God."*

### **Summary:**

Almost 2000 years before Jesus was born, there was a man named Abraham. God had promised to Abraham that He would have many descendants and God would make him into a great nation. For hundreds and hundreds of years, God grew, protected, and cared for these descendants of Abraham - the Israelites - as His people.

But now God was doing a new thing. He was establishing a new covenant and a new people. No longer would God's people simply be ethnic descendants of Abraham, but now they would be spiritual descendants of Abraham. No longer would they be marked by what family they were born into, but by faith that would gain them entrance to the true family of God.

The birth of Jesus, through the line of Abraham, brought hope for all who would trust and believe in Him - both Jew and Gentile. God was fulfilling His promise - through Abraham's line He was establishing for Himself a people to worship Him and be in His presence forever.

### **Questions:**

1. What stood out to you from today's reading?
2. In light of Jesus' fulfillment of God's promises, how is Genesis 11 good news for you today?
3. How can you gain encouragement from the fact that God keeps His promises to His people?



## ***Week 2***

## **Monday, December 7th**

### **Scripture: Luke 1:67-80**

*67 And his father Zechariah was filled with the Holy Spirit and prophesied, saying, 68 "Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, for he has visited and redeemed his people 69 and has raised up a horn of salvation for us in the house of his servant David, 70 as he spoke by the mouth of his holy prophets from of old, 71 that we should be saved from our enemies and from the hand of all who hate us 72 to show the mercy promised to our fathers and to remember his holy covenant, 73 the oath that he swore to our father Abraham, to grant us 74 that we, being delivered from the hand of our enemies, might serve him without fear, 75 in holiness and righteousness before him all our days. 76 And you, child, will be called the prophet of the Most High; for you will go before the Lord to prepare his ways, 77 to give knowledge of salvation to his people in the forgiveness of their sins, 78 because of the tender mercy of our God, whereby the sunrise shall visit us from on high 79 to give light to those who sit in darkness and in the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the way of peace." 80 And the child grew and became strong in spirit, and he was in the wilderness until the day of his public appearance to Israel.*

### **Summary:**

Before the Birth of Jesus was foretold to his mother Mary, The birth of John the Baptist was foretold to Zechariah, the husband of her relative, Elizabeth. The two had wanted a child but were well past child bearing years. One day the Angel Gabriel approached Zechariah and told him that his prayers had been answered "and your wife Elizabeth will bear you a son, and you shall call his name John." Zechariah questioned the angel, and because of this, he was left mute until "the day that these things take place." Many months later, we find ourselves in their home, after Elizabeth had given birth to her baby boy. After declaring his name would be John, Zechariah was finally able to speak.

Moments after being able to speak, Zechariah declared over his son that he would be called "the Prophet of the Most High", going before Jesus to prepare people for His coming! Because the church, pre-Jesus, was so focused on salvation by way of works, the world was not ready for Jesus and his message of forgiveness of sins and salvation by grace through faith in Him. It was John's calling to prepare the people for that. But, just as we live on God's time, so did John. He remained in the wilderness until it was time for him to come and declare the hope of Jesus, to the people who had become accustomed to living in darkness.

### **Questions:**

1. What stood out to you from today's reading?
2. How do you gain hope through the fact that we are "*saved from our enemies and from the hand of all who hate us*" especially in a world where division seems so prevalent?
3. Jesus, the light of the world, our Sunrise, has visited us so that we no longer have to "sit in darkness." What are some areas in your life where you find yourself getting comfortable sitting in your sin, instead of bringing it into the light of Christ?

## **Tuesday, December 8th**

### **Scripture: Luke 1:68-69, Psalm 132:13-18**

*68 "Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, for he has visited and redeemed his people 69 and has raised up a horn of salvation for us in the house of his servant David.*

*13 For the LORD has chosen Zion; he has desired it for his dwelling place: 14 "This is my resting place forever; here I will dwell, for I have desired it. 15 I will abundantly bless her provisions; I will satisfy her poor with bread. 16 Her priests I will clothe with salvation, and her saints will shout for joy. 17 There I will make a horn to sprout for David; I have prepared a lamp for my anointed. 18 His enemies I will clothe with shame, but on him his crown will shine."*

### **Summary:**

When these passages mention the "Horn of Salvation" it is both speaking directly about Jesus Christ himself, and is referencing an animal horn. Jesus is the only source of salvation for the world and he is in the lineage, or "house", of King David. Not only is the horn a symbol of strength, which we see in many animals, like stags or rams, but horns were often hollowed out into instruments to be sounded in battle to give troops direction and lead them to victory. Also, in the book of 1 Samuel we see a horn also used to store oil. It is with a horn that David, after being called in from the fields, was chosen and anointed to be the future king.

When animals grow their horns, they are used as weapons to protect what is theirs, and defend themselves from their enemies. Jesus, is our Horn of Salvation, protecting us from our ultimate enemy, when we accept Him as our King.

### **Questions:**

1. What stood out to you from today's reading?
2. How does knowing that Christ is our Horn of Salvation affect your view of this world?
3. Spend time reflecting on where you have seen Christ conquer the enemy in history and in your life.

## **Wednesday, December 9th**

### **Scripture: Luke 1:68-75, Hebrews 4:14-16**

*68 "Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, for he has visited and redeemed his people 69 and has raised up a horn of salvation for us in the house of his servant David, 70 as he spoke by the mouth of his holy prophets from of old, 71 that we should be saved from our enemies and from the hand of all who hate us 72 to show the mercy promised to our fathers and to remember his holy covenant, 73 the oath that he swore to our father Abraham, to grant us 74 that we, being delivered from the hand of our enemies, might serve him without fear, 75 in holiness and righteousness before him all our days.*

*14 Since then we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus, the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession. 15 For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin. 16 Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.*

### **Summary:**

We serve a God who loves us so dearly that he sent his only Son to die for us. In verse 74, it is important to notice the way things are ordered. It clearly states that we are delivered from our enemies, therefore we might serve without fear. We are already saved from our enemies with the blood of Jesus. And because of this sacrifice we can live a life serving Him, knowing that we are already victorious in Him.

In Hebrews it says that He is able to sympathize with our weakness. Jesus was tempted just as we are by the enemy, yet He never gave in to sin.. He was 100% man so that he could relate to our struggles and our emotions. He knows us perfectly, and loves us perfectly, and we can take all of our fears, anxieties, and struggles to him.

### **Questions:**

1. What stood out to you from today's reading?
2. Knowing that your enemies are already defeated, how does that affect the way you serve King Jesus?
3. How has Jesus been a great high priest who sympathizes with your weakness in the temptations and struggles of this life?

## **Thursday, December 10th**

### **Scripture: Luke 1:76-78, Luke 3:1-6**

*76 And you, child, will be called the prophet of the Most High; for you will go before the Lord to prepare his ways, 77 to give knowledge of salvation to his people in the forgiveness of their sins, 78 because of the tender mercy of our God, whereby the sunrise shall visit us from on high*

*1 In the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Caesar, Pontius Pilate being governor of Judea, and Herod being tetrarch of Galilee, and his brother Philip tetrarch of the region of Ituraea and Trachonitis, and Lysanias tetrarch of Abilene, 2 during the high priesthood of Annas and Caiaphas, the word of God came to John the son of Zechariah in the wilderness. 3 And he went into all the region around the Jordan, proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. 4 As it is written in the book of the words of Isaiah the prophet, "The voice of one crying in the wilderness: Prepare the way of the Lord make his paths straight. 5 Every valley shall be filled, and every mountain and hill shall be made low, and the crooked shall become straight, and the rough places shall become level ways, 6 and all flesh shall see the salvation of God."*

### **Summary:**

John the Baptist, a relative of Jesus, was called to prepare the way for Jesus and His gift of salvation. And the amazing thing is, the prophet Isaiah foretold John the Baptist and his message over 800 years before he was even born. The words of John the Baptist proclaimed a need for a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of our sins. This Holiday season, we have the invitation to rest in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ, whose blood washes us clean when we repent of our sinfulness and follow Him. Upon following Him, we know that troubles will still exist, but we also know that He will be with us in those valleys, mountains, and rough places.

### **Questions:**

1. What stood out to you from these passages?
2. How can you practice repentance this advent season and onward?
3. How have you seen the Lord with you in the mountains and valleys of life?

## **Friday, December 11th**

### **Scripture: Luke 1:78-79, John 8:12-20**

*78 because of the tender mercy of our God, whereby the sunrise shall visit us from on high 79 to give light to those who sit in darkness and in the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the way of peace."*

*12 Again Jesus spoke to them, saying, "I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life." 13 So the Pharisees said to him, "You are bearing witness about yourself; your testimony is not true." 14 Jesus answered, "Even if I do bear witness about myself, my testimony is true, for I know where I came from and where I am going, but you do not know where I come from or where I am going. 15 You judge according to the flesh; I judge no one. 16 Yet even if I do judge, my judgment is true, for it is not I alone who judge, but I and the Father who sent me. 17 In your Law it is written that the testimony of two people is true. 18 I am the one who bears witness about myself, and the Father who sent me bears witness about me." 19 They said to him therefore, "Where is your Father?" Jesus answered, "You know neither me nor my Father. If you knew me, you would know my Father also." 20 These words he spoke in the treasury, as he taught in the temple; but no one arrested him, because his hour had not yet come.*

### **Summary:**

The people of God had been living in a great darkness. They had lived through thousands of years of waiting - waiting for a promised Messiah - a redeemer who would lead them back to God. They had now experienced 400 years of quiet. God was not speaking to them through prophets, signs, or wonders like He had before. They needed rescuing. They needed light.

Suddenly, Jesus arrives on the scene. There Messiah was here at last. He had not come simply bringing light, but being the light of the world. These people, who had lived in the darkness of slavery to their sin and guilt, were now to be freed and brought into the light, where God dwells. Advent is an announcement of the arrival of light in the darkness and hope to the hopeless!

### **Questions:**

1. What stood out to you from these passages?
2. In what areas of your life do you need the light of Christ to shine?
3. How is advent an announcement of the arrival of light into your own life?

## ***Week 3***

## **Monday, December 14th**

### **Scripture: Luke 2:8-14**

*8 And in the same region there were shepherds out in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night. 9 And an angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were filled with great fear. 10 And the angel said to them, "Fear not, for behold, I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people. 11 For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord. 12 And this will be a sign for you: you will find a baby wrapped in swaddling cloths and lying in a manger." 13 And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God and saying, 14 "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace among those with whom he is pleased!"*

### **Summary:**

Sometimes we feel so afraid to share the gospel with others. What if they get angry? What if they don't want to be friends? What if it's awkward? But after Jesus was born, the angels appear to the shepherds rejoicing. They tell them not to fear because the gospel is good news.

Imagine passing by a tragic car accident on the interstate. As you approach, there are ambulances everywhere and it's clear someone has died. Wouldn't it be the best news if someone stopped their car, hopped out and exclaimed, "Wait! Don't take his body away! I have an antidote that will bring him back to life!" That's what the scene in the field that night was like. The shepherds had probably spent years wondering and waiting. And finally the time had come. God had sent his Messiah to take away the sins of the world! Every Christmas, we celebrate the Son of God coming to dwell with us so that he might bring us from death to life. It truly is the best news.

### **Questions:**

1. What stood out to you from the Bible passage?
2. Take a few minutes to listen to "Joy Has Dawned" by KingsK (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=v4u28GehE60>). Allow the Holy Spirit to use the song to lead you to worship God for this joy-filled good news of Jesus.
3. How does the saving power of Jesus compel us to share the gospel with those around us?



## **Tuesday, December 15th**

### **Scripture: Luke 2:10, Psalm 16**

*10 And the angel said to them, "Fear not, for behold, I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people.*

*1 Preserve me, O God, for in you I take refuge. 2 I say to the LORD, "You are my Lord; I have no good apart from you." 3 As for the saints in the land, they are the excellent ones, in whom is all my delight. 4 The sorrows of those who run after another god shall multiply; their drink offerings of blood I will not pour out or take their names on my lips. 5 The LORD is my chosen portion and my cup; you hold my lot. 6 The lines have fallen for me in pleasant places; indeed, I have a beautiful inheritance. 7 I bless the LORD who gives me counsel; in the night also my heart instructs me. 8 I have set the LORD always before me; because he is at my right hand, I shall not be shaken. 9 Therefore my heart is glad, and my whole being rejoices; my flesh also dwells secure. 10 For you will not abandon my soul to Sheol, or let your holy one see corruption. 11 You make known to me the path of life; in your presence there is fullness of joy; at your right hand are pleasures forevermore.*

### **Summary:**

In the field that night, the angels tell the shepherds that the gospel was good news meant to bring joy to its hearers. In Psalm 16, David reflects on this good news. He recognizes that he has no good apart from God. Because God has sovereignly chosen David and lavished him with love, David rejoices over his beautiful inheritance. Because of God's great mercy, David rests in the security he has. God has not abandoned him or forgotten him. Instead, David has experienced refuge in the presence of God.

Because of Jesus' life and death, we get to experience the presence of God too! We can sing the same song that David did, rejoicing that God has not left us in our sin and we don't have to go looking for salvation elsewhere. We don't have to hide in shame from God. We are free to enjoy His presence forever!

### **Questions:**

1. What stood out to you from these passages?
2. Take a minute to pray and thank God for His invitation to you to be in His presence.
3. In light of the fact that God has not left you in your sin but welcomes you to Himself, what sins do you need to stop hiding and confess to both God and others?

## **Wednesday, December 16th**

### **Scripture: Luke 2:11, Matthew 1:18-23**

*11 For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord.*

*18 Now the birth of Jesus Christ took place in this way. When his mother Mary had been betrothed to Joseph, before they came together she was found to be with child from the Holy Spirit. 19 And her husband Joseph, being a just man and unwilling to put her to shame, resolved to divorce her quietly. 20 But as he considered these things, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, saying, "Joseph, son of David, do not fear to take Mary as your wife, for that which is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. 21 She will bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins." 22 All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had spoken by the prophet: 23 "Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and they shall call his name Immanuel" (which means, God with us).*

### **Summary:**

Over the course of His ministry and after His death, Jesus has a lot of roles and titles: Son of Man, Holy and Righteous One, rabbi, Author of life, teacher. Jesus came to earth and did all sorts of ministry. He cared for the poor and sick, He taught people the Word of God, and He did all sorts of miracles. But the most important title Jesus had is shared with the shepherds after he was born. Jesus is the Savior.

The Son of God took on flesh, cared for people, taught people, served people and ultimately died for His people so that He might save His people from their sins. God did for us what we couldn't do. He lived the life that we were called to live in perfect obedience to God. He took on the fullness of God's wrath by dying on the cross. And He rose from the dead, loosening Satan's vice grip on creation. Before Jesus is anything else, He is our only Savior.

### **Questions:**

1. What stood out to you from these passages?
2. How is the fact that Jesus is your only Savior good news this Advent season?
3. Take a few minutes to pray and thank Jesus for dying for you and saving you.

## **Thursday, December 17th**

### **Scripture: Luke 2:13-14, Romans 3:21-31**

*13 And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God and saying, 14 “Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace among those with whom he is pleased!”*

*21 But now the righteousness of God has been manifested apart from the law, although the Law and the Prophets bear witness to it— 22 the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all who believe. For there is no distinction: 23 for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, 24 and are justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, 25 whom God put forward as a propitiation by his blood, to be received by faith. This was to show God's righteousness, because in his divine forbearance he had passed over former sins. 26 It was to show his righteousness at the present time, so that he might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus. 27 Then what becomes of our boasting? It is excluded. By what kind of law? By a law of works? No, but by the law of faith. 28 For we hold that one is justified by faith apart from works of the law. 29 Or is God the God of Jews only? Is he not the God of Gentiles also? Yes, of Gentiles also, 30 since God is one—who will justify the circumcised by faith and the uncircumcised through faith. 31 Do we then overthrow the law by this faith? By no means! On the contrary, we uphold the law.*

### **Summary:**

The army of angels burst into song, praising God for the birth of Jesus. Romans 3:21-31 reminds us of why we praise God for Jesus. Apart from trusting in Jesus, we are unable to be righteous. Because of our sin we fall woefully short of the glory of God that we were created to magnify. But Jesus changes everything. We no longer rely upon our works to justify us. We rely solely on the free gift of grace that Jesus secured for us. Just like the angels, our response ought to be one of adoration.

### **Questions:**

1. What stood out to you from these passages?
2. How can you use this Advent season to give God glory, even in the midst of the hustle and bustle of Christmas?
3. The Angels came singing, “Glory to God in the highest!” How can you cultivate a heart of praise through how you celebrate Advent?

## **Friday, December 18th**

### **Scripture: Luke 2:13-14, Ephesians 2:11-22**

*13 And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God and saying, 14 “Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace among those with whom he is pleased!”*

*11 Therefore remember that at one time you Gentiles in the flesh, called “the uncircumcision” by what is called the circumcision, which is made in the flesh by hands— 12 remember that you were at that time separated from Christ, alienated from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world. 13 But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ. 14 For he himself is our peace, who has made us both one and has broken down in his flesh the dividing wall of hostility 15 by abolishing the law of commandments expressed in ordinances, that he might create in himself one new man in place of the two, so making peace, 16 and might reconcile us both to God in one body through the cross, thereby killing the hostility. 17 And he came and preached peace to you who were far off and peace to those who were near. 18 For through him we both have access in one Spirit to the Father. 19 So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, 20 built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone, 21 in whom the whole structure, being joined together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord. 22 In him you also are being built together into a dwelling place for God by[b] the Spirit.*

### **Summary:**

Jesus brings complete peace. What a beautiful truth for our restless hearts! Before Jesus, we were enemies of God. We were at an impasse with our sin, unable to conquer it ourselves. When Jesus arrives on the scene, he doesn't just bring a ceasefire between good versus evil. He abolishes the law, not by dismissing the law, but by conquering it. When he died on the cross and rose from the grave, the “dividing wall of hostility” between us and our Creator crumbled to the ground.

As a result of the peace we now have with God, the Bible tells us that we can have peace with each other too! Where there used to be two broken people wrecked by sin, Jesus creates “one new man in the place of the two.” The things that divide us and threaten peace – idolatry, enmity, strife, jealousy, anger, rivalries, dissensions, and divisions – are no match for the peace of Christ and the new person he creates in his church.

### **Questions:**

1. What stood out to you from these passages?
2. In what specific areas of your life would you like to experience the peace of Christ?
3. What sins do you need to repent of that threaten peace and unity in our church?

## ***Week 4***

## **Monday, December 21st**

### **Scripture: Luke 2:25-35**

*25 Now there was a man in Jerusalem, whose name was Simeon, and this man was righteous and devout, waiting for the consolation of Israel, and the Holy Spirit was upon him. 26 And it had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not see death before he had seen the Lord's Christ. 27 And he came in the Spirit into the temple, and when the parents brought in the child Jesus, to do for him according to the custom of the Law, 28 he took him up in his arms and blessed God and said, 29 "Lord, now you are letting your servant depart in peace, according to your word; 30 for my eyes have seen your salvation. 31 that you have prepared in the presence of all peoples, 32 a light for revelation to the Gentiles, and for glory to your people Israel." 33 And his father and his mother marveled at what was said about him. 34 And Simeon blessed them and said to Mary his mother, "Behold, this child is appointed for the fall and rising of many in Israel, and for a sign that is opposed 35 (and a sword will pierce through your own soul also), so that thoughts from many hearts may be revealed."*

### **Summary:**

Here in Luke 2, we are introduced to a man in history that could easily have been ignored or forgotten. Simeon, a righteous man in the Lord's sight, was living by faith, not only in words but in deeds. Anna, in the same category as Simeon, was constant in worship and longing to see what Isaiah had promised. They worshiped God and longed to see the redemption of God's people. But for now they were stuck waiting for the liberation of Jerusalem. Waiting for the consolation, encouragement, and comfort prophesied long ago.

Like many Jews, Simeon would have spent his life waiting anxiously to see his redeemer. This was much more than simply waiting for an Amazon delivery or the arrival of a long-awaited friend. This was everything. And now, Jesus was here! When he saw Jesus, he received with his arms wide open. The long-awaited Messiah was here. Salvation was delivered and is now tangible for God's people.

The greatest gift had arrived and those whose longing had now been made sight were overjoyed. But now we get to see what Simeon waited so long to see. Christ has come! What a privilege that we no longer wait, because the promised Messiah has done His work!

### **Questions:**

1. What stood out to you from today's reading?
2. How would you feel if you were Simeon, waiting your entire life for the promised Redeemer who has now come?
3. How is being a Christian on this side of the cross such a blessing, when you consider people like Simeon and Anna, who waited so long for the promised Messiah?

## **Tuesday, December 22nd**

### **Scripture: Luke 2:30, 1 Timothy 1:12-17**

*30 for my eyes have seen your salvation.*

*12 I thank him who has given me strength, Christ Jesus our Lord, because he judged me faithful, appointing me to his service, 13 though formerly I was a blasphemer, persecutor, and insolent opponent. But I received mercy because I had acted ignorantly in unbelief, 14 and the grace of our Lord overflowed for me with the faith and love that are in Christ Jesus. 15 The saying is trustworthy and deserving of full acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am the foremost. 16 But I received mercy for this reason, that in me, as the foremost, Jesus Christ might display his perfect patience as an example to those who were to believe in him for eternal life. 17 To the King of the ages, immortal, invisible, the only God, be honor and glory forever and ever. Amen.*

### **Summary:**

The conversion of Paul is such a magnificent picture of the gospel. Paul's story was defined by mercy. Paul was a chief enemy of the early church. He hated, displaced, opposed, persecuted, and murdered Christians. There is no human reason a man like Paul would start worshiping Jesus. But Paul met Christ, and the good news of the gospel transformed him.

It does not matter how sinful or opposed to God a man is when he comes face to face with the almighty. Jesus' compassion for sinners always overflows to reconcile His enemies and welcome them into His family. Paul's story celebrates Jesus's patience, grace and mercy. God showed mercy to him to be an example for other people around the world who would believe. If Jesus was so patient and graceful to a murderer like Paul, then there is hope in Jesus for all who sin and fall short.

### **Questions:**

1. What stood out to you from today's reading?
2. Jesus came bringing salvation for all who would believe. Take a minute to thank God for His work of salvation in your life.
3. Is there anyone in your life you think is too lost for the saving grace of God? How does Paul's story encourage you to pray and hope that they too can be saved?

## **Wednesday, December 23rd**

### **Scripture: Luke 2:30-32, Revelation 7:9-12**

*30 for my eyes have seen your salvation. 31 that you have prepared in the presence of all peoples, 32 a light for revelation to the Gentiles, and for glory to your people Israel.”*

*9 I was once alive apart from the law, but when the commandment came, sin came alive and I died. 10 The very commandment that promised life proved to be death to me. 11 For sin, seizing an opportunity through the commandment, deceived me and through it killed me. 12 So the law is holy, and the commandment is holy and righteous and good.*

### **Summary:**

When we become Christians, we do not simply get God as Father, but we also get brothers and sisters. To be a child of God means we are adopted into God's family. God is our Father not based on our genes, knowledge, achievements, or nationality but all by grace through Christ our King. But if we're not careful, we can forget that this family of God is bigger than just our local church, our region, or even our country. The family of God is for all who would believe. This is the shocking part of Luke 2:30-32. Jesus, the promised Messiah long awaited by the Jews, was here to be a Savior for all people - both Jew *and* Gentile!

Jesus was not just to be an Israel Messianic king but Lord of all humanity. There is something about God that is universally worthy and so deeply satisfying that God will find passionate admirers in every ethnicity in the world. We get this beautiful picture in heaven of a human race from every nation, from all tribes and languages that no one could number perfectly achieved in the son of God. Praise God we are included into this massive multi-ethnic family, and one day we will be praising Jesus alongside our sisters and brothers that we don't know yet from around the world, crying out "Salvation belongs to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb".

### **Questions:**

1. What stood out to you from today's reading?
2. How does this passage humble or challenge you as you consider the fact that you are a part of God's worldwide multicultural kingdom and family?
3. Take some time to pray for the global church and our brothers and sisters across the globe worshiping their Savior during this season.



## Thursday, December 24th

### Scripture: Luke 2:29-32, John 1:1-18

29 "Lord, now you are letting your servant depart in peace, according to your word; 30 for my eyes have seen your salvation. 31 that you have prepared in the presence of all peoples, 32 a light for revelation to the Gentiles, and for glory to your people Israel."

*In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. 2 He was in the beginning with God. 3 All things were made through him, and without him was not anything made that was made. 4 In him was life, and the life was the light of men. 5 The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it. 6 There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. 7 He came as a witness, to bear witness about the light, that all might believe through him. 8 He was not the light, but came to bear witness about the light. 9 The true light, which gives light to everyone, was coming into the world. 10 He was in the world, and the world was made through him, yet the world did not know him. 11 He came to his own, and his own people did not receive him. 12 But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God, 13 who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God. 14 And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth. 15 (John bore witness about him, and cried out, "This was he of whom I said, 'He who comes after me ranks before me, because he was before me.'") 16 For from his fullness we have all received, grace upon grace. 17 For the law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ. 18 No one has ever seen God; the only God, who is at the Father's side, he has made him known.*

### Summary:

Imagine our world without light. Try to picture the chaos and confusion that would result. John writes that since sin entered the world, that is the natural spiritual state of all people - lost in darkness. Because of their sin nature, all people reject coming into a relationship with the Light. But John also tells us the great news that the very same person who created the universe and is the source of light and life - this Jesus came to our world.

Jesus came to our world to show the Father's heart - full of grace and truth. Christ came to deal with our shame and guilt and free us to walk in union with God. Whoever received Him, who believed in His name, are freed from darkness and given the right to become children of God.

### Questions:

1. What stood out to you from today's reading?
2. What would you stop being afraid to do if you know that you are already loved and that Jesús came to bring light and life and you're a child of God?

## **Friday, December 25th**

### **Scripture: Luke 2:33-35, John 3:16-21**

*33 And his father and his mother marveled at what was said about him. 34 And Simeon blessed them and said to Mary his mother, "Behold, this child is appointed for the fall and rising of many in Israel, and for a sign that is opposed 35 (and a sword will pierce through your own soul also), so that thoughts from many hearts may be revealed."*

*16 "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life. 17 For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him. 18 Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only Son of God. 19 And this is the judgment: the light has come into the world, and people loved the darkness rather than the light because their works were evil. 20 For everyone who does wicked things hates the light and does not come to the light, lest his works should be exposed. 21 But whoever does what is true comes to the light, so that it may be clearly seen that his works have been carried out in God."*

### **Summary:**

Jesus is not only life, grace and love, but also truth. God so loved the world that he gave his Son Jesus to give light and life into the world full of darkness and hopelessness. But those who walked in darkness did not embrace the light. The Bible says that people in darkness prefer their own way, separated from God and fellowship with Jesus Christ. People in darkness hate the light because the light exposes their sin.

But the Father's heart is so eager to show to the world His grace and mercy that He made a way to reconcile us with Himself through His Son. Through the sacrifice, death, and resurrection of Jesus, we can be made right with God. So whoever believes in Him, we no longer walk as those who hate the light and love the dark. We are now free to walk in the light as He is the light and enjoy the presence of God forever.

### **Questions:**

1. What stood out to you from today's reading?
2. How does the gospel invite us to walk in the light as Christ is in the light?