

GraceCity Advent Study

A Holy Night



Week #4

December 18-December 24, 2017

"A Holy Celebration" (Luke 2:1-15)

The birth of Jesus marked the end of Mary's pregnancy and the end of Israel's wait for a savior; however, more than an end, the birth was the start of so much more! Jesus was God incarnate. His earthly ministry brought about embracing the lepers, healing the sick, raising the dead, and the forgiveness of sins. And yet, for all of the miracles during Jesus' life on earth, Jesus' ultimate purpose was to die. On the cross, Jesus paid the cost of our sins and brought all of us – the Jews and the Gentiles, the slaves and the free, male and female – in right relationship with God. What a cause for celebration!

Preparation: Listen to "[O Holy Night](#)." Reflect on the [lyrics](#) (links embedded) and consider how the themes from this Advent study – "A Holy Timing," "A Holy Calling," "A Holy King," and "A Holy Celebration" – are evident in this song. How does the melody capture the emotion surrounding the birth?

Read: Luke 2:1-15

Looking at the text:

1. Why did Mary and Joseph travel to Bethlehem? How do verses 1-3 support the "fullness of time" (*Gal. 4:4*) discussed in week 1? (*See also Micah 5:2*)
2. Describe the setting into which Jesus was born. How does this compare to the presumptions surrounding a royal birth? (*Consider the Israelites' expectations from week 3*)
3. How do the angel's and heavenly host's messages to the shepherds mirror what the angel Gabriel told Mary in Luke 1? How do the shepherds' responses resemble Mary's? (*Refer to week 2*)
4. Building off of week 3 and Isaiah 9:6, what do the meanings behind the names the angel uses for Jesus tell us about who Jesus is?
5. What is meaning behind the message of the heavenly host? (*Consider Eph. 1:3-10*)

For discussion:

1. At that time, shepherds were social outcasts; yet, they were the first to hear that Jesus had been born and were told by angels, no less. Why might God have chosen to tell the shepherds first? (*Consider 1 Cor. 1:26-27*)
2. How does Jesus' arrival on earth foreshadow his ministry and death? (*Consider Phil. 2:5-11*)
3. Later in Luke 2 after the shepherds find the Christ child, they spread the good news, and all who heard were amazed! How do we respond to God appearing in our lives?
4. Place yourself in the passage as a shepherd, one of the heavenly host, and Mary and Joseph. At that instant, the shepherds' routine was interrupted by a message from God, the heavenly host declared the good being done in the world, and Mary and Joseph finally received the child they had been expecting. Can you apply these to seasons in your life? Which one do you relate to now?
5. The Christmas season can be difficult as all the gatherings and celebrations can magnify feelings of loss, disappointment, or loneliness. What message of hope and cause for celebration is found in the first Christmas? How can we surround in love those experiencing hardship this season?

**** Praise God for the birth of His Son! Pause to truly appreciate how God is revealing himself in our lives. Rejoice and share this with others. Reflect on the true meaning of Christmas and the gift we were given. Celebrate Jesus' birth for what it means not just for us individually, but for the world!*

This study has been developed for personal reflection and group discussion. To participate in the conversation, join a GraceCity small group. For more information on times and locations, email smallgroups@gracecitybaltimore.org.

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