

GOING DEEPER STUDY NOTES DECEMBER 6, 2020

Today is the **Second Sunday in Advent**. Having concluded our 10-week all church Community Group series focusing on the book AHA (Awakening, Honesty, and Action) we now focus on the season of Advent. Advent includes the four Sundays prior to Christmas. If the accounts of the birth of Jesus in the Bible are true then what took place 2000 years ago in Bethlehem affects every aspect of our life. It changes our relationships, our priorities, how we understand God, how we view ourselves, how we live in this world. Here at Grace we believe it is true. This One decision of God to enter our world, to come in person, to speak of, and demonstrate, love, provides the hope, peace, love and joy that we, everyone, needs. Join us this Advent season as we take a closer look at the miracle of Christmas. We invite you "Home for the Holidays."

AHA CHAPTER 13 QUESTIONS (FOR LAST WEEK'S AHA)

WHAT DOES IT SAY? Read the Prodigal Parable (Luke 15:11-32)

1. Re-read Luke 15:29-32. How would you describe the relationship between the father and his older son?

WHAT DOES IT MEAN?

2. What is your best definition of "justice" and of "mercy"?

WHAT IS GOD SAYING TO YOU?

3. In your opinion is it harder for someone far from God to turn their life around and yield to God, or is it harder for someone who is a good well-respected person to turn their life around and yield to God?
4. How does an awareness of God's mercy offered to us affect our relationship with God, with others, with ourselves?
5. How does God see you? What would God say to you if you were to meet Him face to face?

First Sunday in Advent Questions (HOPE) (Sunday November 29)

6. Read the account of the birth of Jesus in Matthew 1:18-25
 - o What does this story communicate about God and His relationship with us?
 - o How does the promise of "Immanuel: God with us" impact you in your day to day life?
 - o How does the miracle of Christmas change your hope for your future, the future for your children and your grandchildren?

SECOND SUNDAY IN ADVENT - PEACE

WHAT DOES IT SAY?

In the book of Isaiah read chapter 53, verses 1-6,. Isaiah prophesied to God's people more than 600 years prior to the birth of Jesus. Prophecies like this one had a current meaning for the people of that day, and also a future meaning discovered much later. From the earliest years of Christian faith Isaiah 53 has been understood as pointing to the arrival of Jesus, and to His role in God's plan to rescue us.

1. As you read Isaiah 53:1-6 what image do you have of the person Isaiah is speaking of?
2. Why would God choose someone who had "no beauty that we should desire him?" What does this say about God's priorities, and our priorities? Read 1 Samuel 16:6-7. How should this change the way we view others?
3. Do you see any parallels between this prophesy and the life and ministry of Jesus? Write out your thoughts/questions.

WHAT DOES IT MEAN?

4. How does it help us that God's chosen One, Jesus, was "despised and rejected by men; a man of sorrows, acquainted with grief"? Read Hebrews 4:14-16.
5. What does verse 5 mean to you, particularly, "with his wounds we are healed"?

WHAT IS GOD SAYING TO YOU?

6. Why connect Isaiah 53 with Christmas? How does knowing this prophesy change how we understand Christmas?
7. Isaiah 53, and other prophecies, reveal that Jesus, born to save, was also born to suffer ... for us. This was God's plan all along ... foretold 600+ years before the birth of Jesus. What does this tell us about God's heart? How can this increase our sense of PEACE?

Spend time in silence, praying (even if just for a minute or two). Prayer is simply a conversation with God. Be honest. If you don't know how or what to pray admit that and ask God to help you pray. In your prayer ask God to help you prepare for the miracle of Christmas. Ask Him to help you see not only the baby born in Bethlehem but also the One who brought us peace. Ask God to help you experience real peace. He will help you! He loves you!