

GOING DEEPER STUDY NOTES FOR DECEMBER 13, 2020

For Community Groups or Personal Study

Today is the **Third Sunday in 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, God’s 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.”

THIRD SUNDAY IN ADVENT (LOVE)

ADVENT PASSAGE: ISAIAH 54:1-8

¹ “Sing, O barren one, who did not bear; break forth into singing and cry aloud, you who have not been in labor! For the children of the desolate one will be more than the children of her who is married,’ says the LORD.

² Enlarge the place of your tent, and let the curtains of your habitations be stretched out; do not hold back; lengthen your cords and strengthen your stakes.

³ For you will spread abroad to the right and to the left, and your offspring will possess the nations and will people the desolate cities.

⁴ “Fear not, for you will not be ashamed; be not confounded, for you will not be disgraced; for you will forget the shame of your youth, and the reproach of your widowhood you will remember no more.

⁵ For your maker is your husband, the LORD of hosts is his name; and the Holy One of Israel is your redeemer, the God of the whole earth he is called.

⁶ For the LORD has called you like a wife deserted and grieved in spirit, like the wife of youth when she is cast off, says your God.

⁷ For a brief moment I deserted you, but with great compassion I will gather you.

⁸ In overflowing anger for a moment I hid my face from you, but with everlasting love I will have compassion on you,” says the LORD, your redeemer.

WHAT DOES IT SAY?

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 this morning’s passage, write down all the words that stand out to you.
2. How would this passage have been received by those who had been conquered, lost loved ones to violence, were forcibly taken from their homes, and carried off to live as captives in a foreign land? (Where they lived for decades)

WHAT DOES IT MEAN?

3. Re-read verses 7-8. God’s anger overflowed due to the rebellion and evil acts of his chosen people. He promised to return with compassion. What does this passage say about God’s justice, forgiveness, mercy, and love?
4. Those who felt hopeless and forgotten were now promised a new future. How does this connect with the message given that first Christmas? (to those conquered by Rome, living with violence, slaves in their own land)

WHAT IS GOD SAYING TO YOU?

5. Does the promise of God’s love mean we (you) will never experience hard times, challenges, heartache?
6. How might the promise given in verses 7-8 provide confidence for the future, no matter our current situation?
7. How would most respond to the question, “What is Christmas really about?”
8. How would you answer that question?
9. What steps will you take to share God’s love this Christmas?

Notes: _____

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 celebrate Christmas differently this year. Ask Him to help you look beyond all the gifts and focus on the Greatest gift, Jesus. Ask God to help you believe in, and experience, His love. He will help you! He loves you!