

## **GOING DEEPER STUDY NOTES** FOR DECEMBER 27, 2020

For Community Groups or Personal Study

For many of our friends, possibly family too, Christmas is the culmination, the final point, in a long year. The day after Christmas is bargain day, return day, leftovers day. Within the week storage tubs come out, decorations come down, trees are put away ... and another year begins. It is quite different for Christians. While there are things to put away, gifts to return, leftovers to be eaten, Christmas is the beginning, not the end. What happened that first Christmas was so miraculous, so unexpected, so life changing, that it makes all things new. Each day is a new day. Each relationship a new possibility. Behind each heartache a new hope. With each tear and sorrow a new promise and a new future. With each sunset, each sunrise, something new to learn and experience. With each blessing received a new opportunity to bless others. It is the beginning not the end. It is when and where the love and mercy of the Creator of all things entered this world. Here at Grace we believe the life God offers us is worth living ... and it all began with Immanuel (God with us) in Bethlehem.

### **SUNDAY AFTER CHRISTMAS (WHAT NOW?)**

SERMON PASSAGE: LUKE 2:8-14

“And in the same region there were shepherds out in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night. 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. 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. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a savior, who is Christ the Lord. And this will be a sign for you: you will find a baby wrapped in swaddling cloths and lying in a manger.’ And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God and saying, ‘Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace among those with whom He is pleased.’”

### **WHAT DOES IT SAY?**

Of the four accounts of the life of Jesus in the Bible (Matthew, Mark, Luke and John) only two tell us about that first Christmas (Matthew and Luke). While they both share certain details, each focuses on unique aspects of Jesus’ birth. Matthew tells us of wise men arriving from the east. Luke includes the story of shepherds and angels. All four accounts make it clear the birth of Jesus that first Christmas was history’s most defining moment.

1. Re-read the Christmas story in Luke (chapter 2:1-21) as if it were the first time you’d heard it. What are the aspects of the story that surprise you?
2. Why do you think the Creator of the universe decided to make this announcement to shepherds and not kings?
3. If you had been one of the shepherds that night how would you have felt? What would you have done? How would this experience change your life?

### **WHAT DOES IT MEAN?**

4. What is the significance for us, and for those who wonder if God loves them, of shepherds being chosen for this special message sent from God?
5. Is it possible to have a visit like this from angels and still reject God? Explain your answer.

### **WHAT IS GOD SAYING TO YOU?**

6. How has God revealed Himself to you? How have you responded? How would you like God to speak to you?
7. What are the possible things God could have told the shepherds that night (different from “Good News”)? How might that alter our lives and our relationship with God?
8. How does believing the Christmas story change you and how you live your life? How does believing the good news that Jesus is our savior change our priorities, our relationships with others, our understanding of who God is?

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 understand why He came to earth the way He did. Ask God to help you change your priorities, your anger, your fears, your relationships, your view of this world and the next. He will help you! He loves you!