# DIVING DEEPER DISCUSSION GUIDE



#### TEXT SUMMARY

The first four sermons in our Advent series come from the first chapter of Luke's gospel, from the Annunciation, the angel Gabriel's announcement to Mary about what her son would be and do.

Now, in the final sermon of our Advent series, we pivot to the familiar birth narrative in <u>Luke 2:1-21</u>.

### INTRODUCTION (OBSERVATION):

This story is so familiar we can skate past significant details in the narrative. But if we believe that Luke's writing was inspired by God's Spirit (and we do), we must slow down to see what is here.

- 1. Luke is regarded as a fine historian. His attention to detail is nothing short of meticulous. He is careful to place the story of Jesus' birth in a certain historical context. What details does he provide to identify the precise time-frame for the birth narrative?
- 2. Where were the shepherds when they heard the news (the "first noel") from the angel?
- 3. What phenomena accompanied the arrival of the angel? How did the shepherds respond initially?
- 4. What was the first thing the angel said to them? (Note: this is often the first thing angels say to people when they appear in Scripture, and this is the most-often repeated command in the Bible.)
- 5. In v. 11-12 the angel conveys several key pieces of information about the birth of Jesus. What are the shepherds told?
- 6. What did the shepherds to do with the news they had just heard? What did they do once they had seen the Christ Child for themselves?

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### **DISCUSSION** (INTERPRETATION):

The ESV footnote for v. 14 tells us that there are two possible readings for the rejoicing song of the angels:

- . "peace among those with whom [God] is pleased"
- . "peace, good will among men"

This is an indication that there the ancient manuscripts don't have the same reading, and scholars must do the tedious work of trying to discern which reading is closer to what Luke actually wrote.

- . What difference does it make which reading we take?
- . What are we to take from this text as God's disposition toward us?

## SO WHAT? (APPLICATION):

Luke's gospel seems to emphasize Jesus' kind attention to outsiders, people who were marginalized in first century Jewish society: women, the ill, sinners. Now we see that the first ones to get the news of Jesus' arrival are shepherds, men whose work placed them at the bottom of the Jewish social hierarchy of that day.

Who are the marginalized, the outsiders in your own sphere of influence? If Christmas is the Story of God reaching out to lonely outsiders like us, how can we "pay it forward" for God's kindness and grace in our own lives?