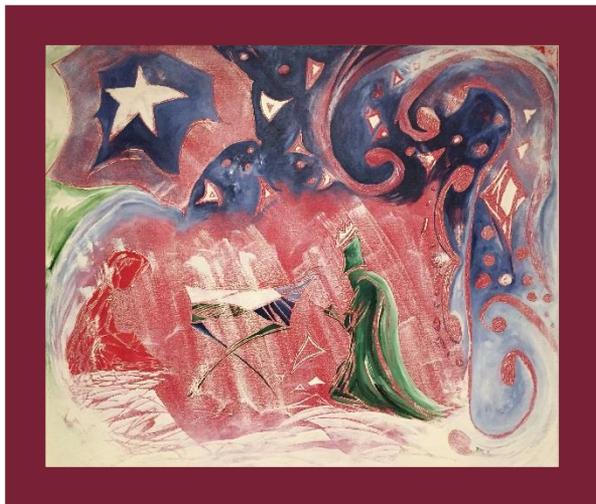


An Advent Study



*God is in
The Manger*

Introduction

Welcome to this Advent Study - “*God is in The Manger.*” This four-week sermon series and study is a follow-up to our previous series, “Upside Down.” During this Fall series, we focused on “following Jesus into the world” through the lens of the early Church in Acts. The incarnation is God’s perfect expression of what it looks like to go “into the world.” This Advent, we turn our eyes to the God who comes to us in the manger. We will be celebrating and reflecting upon this great event and mystery.

Dec. 3	John 1:1-14	God is in The Manger
Dec. 10	Luke 1:26-38	Impossible
Dec. 17	Matthew 1:18-25	Immanuel
Dec. 24	Luke 1:67-80	Illuminate

Disciples are those who **know** Jesus as Lord and Savior, who **grow** together to become like Him, and who **go** on mission with Jesus. This framework of know-grow-go will be used in each week’s study. May this study encourage and instruct you in being a disciple, one who follows Jesus into the world.

God is in the Manger (John 1:1-14)

Perhaps the most significant verse in the Bible about God being “in the manger” comes in John 1:14: “...the Word became flesh and dwelt among us...” Jesus is the Word incarnate – that is, God “in-the-flesh.” This week we explore the mystery of the incarnation.

KNOW



In John 1:1-14, we read significant statements about the Son of God as “the Word.” Summarize John’s teaching about the Word in these verses. What is unique about the Word? What do we learn about the Word’s relationship to creation and to those who believe in Him?

John 1:14 states that “the Word became flesh.” This shocking declaration means that the Son of God took on a human nature. Since the incarnation, He is now and forever both fully God *and* fully human. What do verses 13-18 teach us about why God’s Son “became flesh”?

GROW



According to John 1:14, God's Son became incarnate and people experienced through Him God's "grace and truth." If we are to become more like Jesus, we too, must reflect God in this way. How can you greater reflect the graciousness of Jesus in your relationships? How can you grow to become a person of greater integrity like Jesus?

GO



The Message paraphrase of the Bible renders the first part of John 1:14 this way: "The Word became flesh and blood, and moved into the neighborhood." Following Jesus into the world means we also do "incarnational" ministry. We move into others' "neighborhoods." How might Jesus be calling you to enter into others' worlds to show His grace and truth?

Impossible (Luke 1:26-38)

God is in the manger. It seems impossible, right? Imagine being the woman who would bear the Son of God. This woman's name is Mary, and we see her receive this great calling in this week's passage. As we read this text, we can learn more about a life of faith in Christ.

KNOW



It is interesting to note the parallels between Zechariah's reactions to the angel Gabriel and those of Mary. Read Luke 1:5-25 in light of this week's passage. Compare and contrast these interactions. Consider Mary's faith-filled response to God's work. What questions did Mary have about Gabriel's message? How was she both curious and believing?

GROW



The angel Gabriel declared that "nothing will be impossible with God." Do you believe that? How do your actions reflect or not reflect this belief? How can you increase your trust in God's promises and faithful character?

GO



Following Jesus sometimes requires doing things that seem impossible to do. What keeps you from doing hard things in serving Jesus? In what ways would you like to take more risks for Jesus? Take some time to ask Jesus how He wants to push you to trust Him more.

“Immanuel” (Matthew 1:18-25)

Part of the mystery of the incarnation – God coming in the flesh – is captured in the word, “Immanuel” (“God with us”). Just as God sent an angel to Mary, God did the same with Joseph. The angel made known to Joseph the identity and mission of the baby Mary was bearing.

KNOW



An angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph at a crucial time in his life. According to Matthew 1:18-19, what was Joseph wrestling with at this time? What thoughts and feelings might Joseph have had?

In Matthew 1:20-21, the angel tells Joseph about the identity and significance of the miraculous child Mary is bearing. What did Joseph learn? Describe Joseph’s response to the angel’s message (1:24-25). How do verses 20-23 help us to know Jesus better as our Savior?

GROW



One of Jesus' titles in Scripture is "God with us." How do you desire to be more aware of God's presence in your life? What habits or routines could you take up to train yourself to practice God's presence? How might other followers of Jesus help you in pursuing this?

GO



The name "Jesus" is a Greek form of the Hebrew name "Joshua," which means "the Lord saves." Think about how you talk about Jesus. When others hear your speech about Jesus, what impression do they get of Him? How can you more clearly and fully present Jesus as the Savior of the world?

Illuminate (Luke 1:67-80)

This week's passage highlights one of the purposes of God coming in the flesh – to *illuminate* God's way of salvation. We will be exploring Zechariah's praise and prophecy after the birth of his son, John the Baptist. In this passage, Zechariah speaks of God's purposes for both John and Jesus. Jesus wants to illuminate the way to true life for us.

KNOW



In Luke 1:68-75, Zechariah praises God for fulfilling His promises to “Abraham” and his descendants. What can we learn about God’s “salvation” and “mercy” according to these verses? What is the purpose of God’s merciful salvation (1:73-75)?

The focus shifts, in verses 76-79, to John’s role in God’s plan of salvation. What will John do as “the prophet of the Most High”? How will Jesus “give light” to the world (1:78-79)? What is the effect of the light?

GROW



Zechariah's prayer emphasized the mercy and faithfulness of God. How do you want to have a deeper understanding of God's mercy? How do you want to lean more on God's faithfulness?

GO



In Zechariah's prayer, he praises God that His salvation will enable God's people to now "serve Him without fear." What fears hold you back from serving God? How would you like God to increase your boldness and courage?

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