

Christmas

at MeadowBrook

SONGS OF CHRISTMAS



MeadowBrook
CHURCH

life
group

*Life together for the
Kingdom of God*

10 Action Steps to Get the Best Use Out of This Curriculum

1. Before reading the passage, pray and ask God to open your eyes that you may behold the wondrous truths of his word. (Ps. 119:18)
2. Read the main passage the Saturday before the lesson. Ask the Grow questions as you read and jot down some notes.
3. Read the additional passages that deal with the same theme of the main passage. Ask the Grow questions and jot down some notes.
4. Read the lesson notes in the curriculum.
5. Come to Life Group ready to discuss.
6. Think through the apply questions Sunday afternoon and write down specific ways to apply the lesson to your life that week.
7. Use the prayer guides to launch you into praying through the scripture each day during the week.
8. Use the Multiply section to prompt you to invite someone to church or to share the gospel with them.
 - Consider resolving in your spirit by the grace and power of God to never live another day where you cannot remember the last time you shared the gospel with someone.
9. Meditate daily on some aspect of the scripture passage and the theological truths that are stated in the Multiply section.
10. Memorize the memory verses for the month. Review each day until it is engrained into your mind.

Bonus: If you have a family at home, use the *For the Family* section to lead a family devotional after dinner on Sunday evenings or whichever day is more convenient.

10-minute Family Devotional Schedule

- Read the text. (1 min.)
- Talk briefly about the text and invite discussion. (Use guide) (4 min.)
- Share prayer requests and pray as a family. (4 min.)
- Sing a brief hymn, consider *Doxology* or *I Love you Lord* (1 min.)
(Another option would be to listen to a worship song as a family)

Life Group – *Songs of Christmas* – Dec. 2, 2018

Mary's Song, Luke 1:46-55

CONNECT

Anticipation and hope seem to fill this season of the year every year. What are you anticipating and hoping for this Christmas season?

GROW: Highlight and Explain the Text

Read Main Passage: Luke 1:46-55

(Additional Passages: Prov. 16; Ps. 63, 147:4-5; Mt. 5:1-12; Heb. 4:14-5:10; Jn. 15:1-1-17)

- What do we learn about who God is and what he does from this passage?
- What do we learn about our condition as humans from this passage?
- How is the gospel revealed in this text?
- How should these truths impact our lives today as believers?

SERVE: Apply the Text

- Magnify the Lord in worship.
- Find joy and satisfaction in the Lord.
- Humble yourselves before the Lord and others.
- Fear the Lord.
- Hunger for the Lord.
- Tell of the mercy of the Lord to your children and others.
- Other:

PRAY: Respond to the Text

Who do we know that needs to experience the mercy of the Lord?

Pray for these individuals that they would humble themselves, fear the Lord, and experience the great mercy of the Lord.

Take time to humble yourself before the Lord and repent of any self-righteousness or pride that has welled up in your life.

Pray for the ministry of this church and that the Spirit would anoint our efforts with his power and that there would be lost people coming to know Jesus through our gospel-sharing.

MULTIPLY: Share the Text with Others

Seek to share about the mercy, strength, and satisfaction of God found in Jesus Christ with someone this week and invite them to come to church during this Christmas season.

Jesus was born so that those who repent and believe in him might daily and eternally experience the strength, mercy, and satisfaction of God in their lives by grace through faith.

For the Family: Read Luke 1:46-55 this week together as a family. Highlight some of the characteristics of God and show how he meets the need of our weakness and hunger.

MEMORIZE: Meditate on the Text

¹⁰ 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. ¹¹ For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord. (Luke 2:10-11 ESV)

Life Group – *Songs of Christmas* – Dec. 2, 2018

Mary's Song, Luke 1:46-55

What do we learn about who God is and what he does from this passage?

Who God is...

- **God is mighty.** *He who is mighty...*
He determines the number of the stars; he gives to all of them their names. Great is our Lord, and abundant in power; his understanding is beyond measure. (Psalm 147:4-5, ESV). The God we worship is powerful and mighty beyond any comparison. Everything in this universe was created by his word and is continually sustained by his power. He is not weak or incapable of anything. He is perfect in his might and power, accomplishing anything that he wills.
- **God is personal.** *He who is mighty has done great things for me...*
In all of God's might and infinite power, he is also intensely personal. He knows each of us and cares deeply about what occurs in each of our lives. It is not the will of Jesus to crush us, but to do great things in our lives for his glory. The one who named the stars knows your name and he loves you.
- **God is holy.** *He who is mighty has done great things for me, and holy is his name.*
"Holy, holy, holy is the LORD of hosts; the whole earth is full of his glory!" (Isaiah 6:3b ESV). God is perfectly holy. He is completely set apart and perfect in righteousness. Jesus was tempted in every way just as we are, yet he never sinned even once (Heb. 4:15). We can be confident that everything God does is done in holiness, for he is holy, holy, holy.

What God does...

- **God shows mercy to those who fear him.**
The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom. Those who truly understand God's mightiness and holiness, fear him because they recognize their ungodliness. This leads to them repenting of their sins and calling out to the God who knows them and hears them for mercy, for they have nothing to bring but filth. God hears these cries and shows mercy.
- **God judges the proud in his strength.**
However, in contrast to the wise people who fear the Lord, sits the proud fools who think they are not accountable to a mighty and holy God. In the end, these proud people face judgement and are brought low. Any short-term gains of the wicked should not discourage those pursuing the Lord, because in the end we know that God will vindicate the righteous. In fact, we should love them enough to share with them the mercy that awaits them if they humble themselves and repent and believe in the gospel.
- **God lifts up the humble.**
This life is not where our reward is; our reward is found in eternity. Now we experience hardship, there we will be exalted and will be in the very presence of God! Today, the Lord encourages and lifts the spirits of the humble, but there will be a day when the joy and the peace we experience spiritually and imperfectly, will be physically experienced in perfection. Look to that day as you humble yourself before God and others.
- **God satisfies the hungry.**
Jesus himself is the Bread of Life and those that hunger and thirst for righteousness will be satisfied in him.

- “Jesus calls his people to a desperate hunger. The divine reward for such hunger is complete satisfaction—both now and into eternity.” R. Kent Hughes, *Preaching the Word Commentary Series: Luke*.
- “(Our spiritual hunger) works like this: we hunger spiritually and are then filled and become supremely satisfied. The satisfaction then makes way for a deeper spiritual hunger, a further filling and blessed satisfaction. And so it goes on in sublime paradox: hunger – filling—satisfaction, hunger—filling—satisfaction. We become more and more full of Christ.” Hughes

- **God keeps his promises. (more on this next week.)**

Jesus did not just appear. He had been promised for centuries, and God kept everyone one of his promises then, and still keeps his promises today.

What do we learn about our condition as humans from this passage?

- **We are weak.**

In a world that prizes strength, the gospel reminds us that we are weak. We are incapable of earning righteous standing before God or living righteously among others. We cannot be the spouse/parent/employee/friend we want to be, and know that we need to be, because we are futile creatures. Our strength cannot come from us. We are of “humble estate.” We need the might of the Lord to be our strength. He is the mighty one; he is the capable one; not us. Any endeavors we pursue in our own strength will end poorly. Apart from Christ we can do nothing.

- **We are hungry.**

We are hungry people, always seeking to find satisfaction in this world. Some turn to family, some to work, some to building a lasting legacy, some turn to more carnal pursuits like sex, pornography, and alcohol to find satisfaction. Not only are we hungry for satisfaction, we also lack the righteousness that God requires. It does no good to seek satisfaction in this world or build up our own self-righteousness. God turns away those who think that they are rich in this world. But he satisfies those who hunger and thirst for him and his righteousness.

¹ *A Psalm of David, when he was in the wilderness of Judah. O God, you are my God; earnestly I seek you; my soul thirsts for you; my flesh faints for you, as in a dry and weary land where there is no water.*

² *So I have looked upon you in the sanctuary, beholding your power and glory.* ³ *Because your steadfast love is better than life, my lips will praise you.* (Psalm 63:1-3 ESV)

⁶ *“Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied.* (Matthew 5:6)

How is the gospel revealed in this text?

Jesus was born so that those who repent and believe in him might daily and eternally experience the strength, mercy, and satisfaction of God in their lives by grace through faith. We live in Jesus’ strength, in the freedom of his mercy, in the joy of his satisfaction as he gets the glory.

How should these truths impact our lives today as believers?

- Magnify the Lord in worship.
- Find joy and satisfaction in the Lord.
- Humble yourselves before the Lord and others.
- Fear the Lord.
- Hunger for the Lord.
- Tell of the mercy of the Lord to your children and others.

Life Group – *Songs of Christmas* – Dec. 9, 2018

Zechariah's Song, Luke 1:67-79

CONNECT

Joy is a theme lifted up during this season. What are some of the things that God uses to add joy to your life during this season?

GROW: Highlight and Explain the Text

Read Main Passage: Luke 1:67-79

(Additional Passages: Exo. 34:6-7; Jas. 1:17; Gen. 12:1-3; Jer. 31:30-33; Eze. 36; Jn. 1:1-18)

- What do we learn about who God is and what he does from this passage?
- What do we learn about our condition as humans from this passage?
- How is the gospel revealed in this text?
- How should these truths impact our lives today as believers?

SERVE: Apply the Text

- Motivated by grace, serve the Lord without fear of judgment.
- Motivated by grace, live lives of holiness and righteousness.
- Proclaim the good news of Christ to others.
- Other:

PRAY: Respond to the Text

Who do we know that needs to experience the salvation, light, and peace of the Lord?

Pray for these individuals that they would repent of their sins and believe in Jesus.

Take time to humble yourself before the Lord and repent of any unholiness or unrighteousness that has welled up in your life.

Pray for the ministry of this church and that the Spirit would anoint our efforts with his power and that there would be lost people coming to know Jesus through our gospel-sharing.

MULTIPLY: Share the Text with Others

Seek to share about the salvation, light, and peace of God found in Jesus Christ with someone this week and invite them to come to church during this Christmas season.

The God who created the universe and led the people of Israel, manifested himself in the person of Jesus Christ and dwelt among us as the incarnate God-man, so that he could pay the penalty of sin for mankind and offer salvation that results in a life filled with light and peace to those who repent and believe in the gospel.

For the Family: Read Luke 1:67-79 this week together as a family. Highlight some of the characteristics of God and show how he meets the need of our salvation, our joy and our peace.

MEMORIZE: Meditate on the Text

¹⁰ 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. ¹¹ For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord. (Luke 2:10-11 ESV)

Life Group – *Songs of Christmas* – Dec. 9, 2018

Zechariah's Song, Luke 1:67-79

What do we learn about who God is and what he does from this passage?

Who God is...

- **God is the same yesterday, today, and tomorrow.**

⁶ *The LORD passed before him and proclaimed, "The LORD, the LORD, a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness, ⁷ keeping steadfast love for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, but who will by no means clear the guilty, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children and the children's children, to the third and the fourth generation."* (Exodus 34:6-7 ESV).

The same God we read about in the Old Testament is who manifested himself in the New Testament in the person of Jesus Christ. There was an old false teaching in the early church that sought to do away with the Old Testament Scriptures and tried to draw a distinction between the God of the Old Testament and the God of the New Testament. Today, that has crept back into the church. God has no variation or shadow due to change (Jas. 1:17). There is great value in studying and knowing the Old Testament if done in a Christ-Centered way because it all points to him, and the same things that angered God then—idolatry, unrighteousness, injustice, lack of mercy, pride, lack of witness to the nations, etc.—grieves God today. All scripture elevates Christ and calls us to place our faith in him for our righteousness and devotion in this life. There is a wealth of wisdom and practical knowledge as to how to live by faith, motivated by the grace of the Lord, in this world to be found in the Old testament. Do not neglect it.

What God does...

- **God has visited his people.**

The incarnation is perhaps the most magnificent aspect of the gospel, because in it, God became man. God loved us enough to send his Son so that we might have peace with him. Jesus, in his humility and deep love for the Father and for us, left behind the benefits of God—he emptied himself and took on the form of a man. He walked this earth. He fell and scraped his knee. He went through puberty. He worked a job. He got hungry and thirsty. He experienced death. He experienced rejection. He prayed to the Father and relied on the Holy Spirit. He was a man just like us, but he was also God. 100% Man, 100% God, all the time. This means that God identified with us! He experienced our life in perfect righteousness and humility, so that he might fulfill what he commanded— a holy life lived always to the glory of the Father. The incarnation is God providing what he commanded in his son Jesus Christ, and it was beautiful.

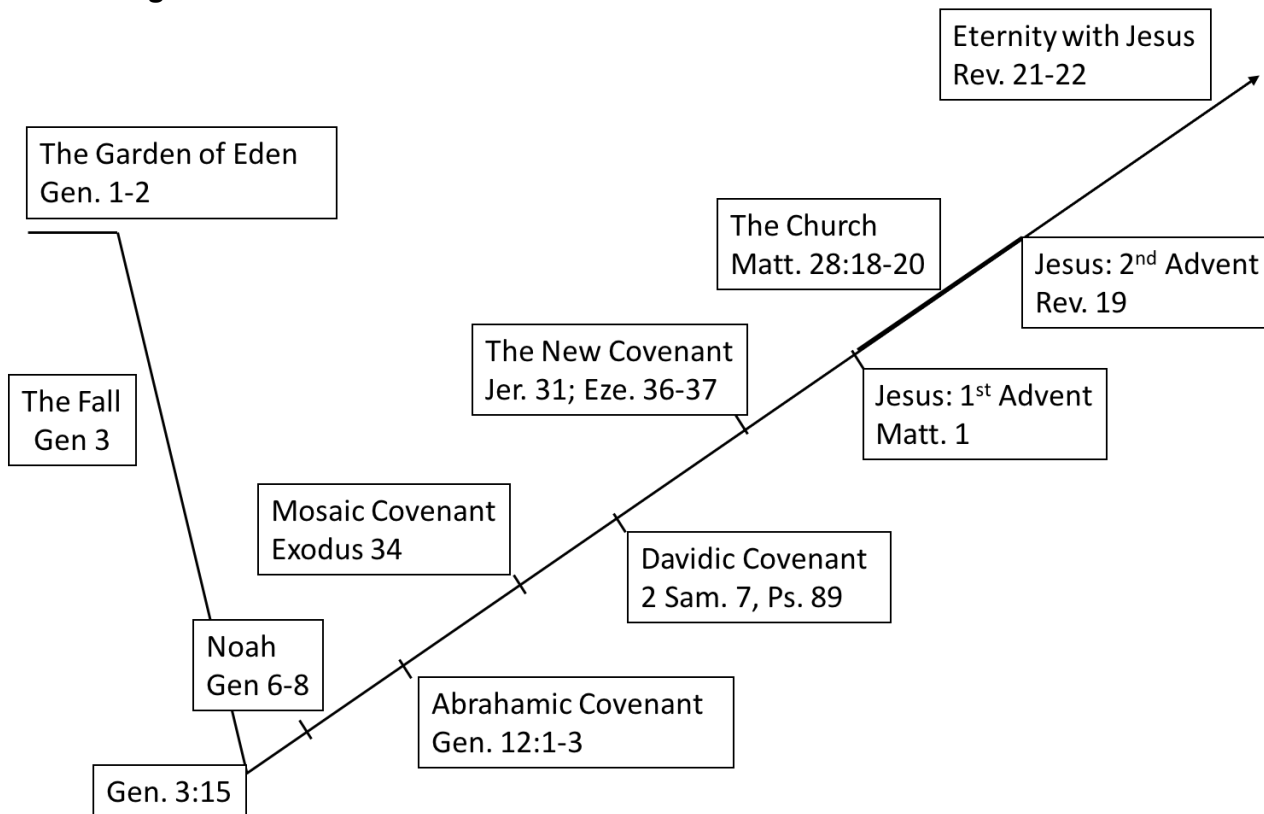
- **God has redeemed his people.**

To redeem means to purchase. Not only did Christ fulfill the righteous requirement of God's law, but he also paid the penalty for our sins. On the cross, where he gave his life, the Father poured out his wrath on his Son—wrath that we deserved! Jesus became sin for us so that we might become the righteousness of God! Now, for those who repent and believe in Jesus, the Father looks at them and legally and honestly declares "Righteous!" because Jesus has paid the price for our sins, cleansed us for all time, and sent his Spirit to indwell us and keep us.

- **God keeps his promises.**

Our God is a covenant God. Ever since the beginning he has been making and keeping promises with the pinnacle of his creation. Abraham, David and the prophets are highlighted specifically in this text referring back to the promises God made through them—the Abrahamic Covenant, the Davidic Covenant, and the New Covenant.

Overarching Chart of Covenants:



Covenants in Luke 1	Major Texts	Highlights
Abrahamic Covenant	Gen. 12:1-3 Gen. 13:14-16 Gen. 15 Gen. 17 Gen. 22	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Land - Offspring - Blessing for his people. - All nations would be blessed through him. <p>Zechariah highlights the blessing God is showing to his people Israel in sending the true and better son of Abraham, through whom also all nations would be blessed.</p>
Davidic Covenant	2 Samuel 7	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - David's offspring would have a kingdom established forever. - He would build a house for the name of the Father. <p>Zechariah highlights the kingdom that will be established forever in which would be peace.</p>
New Covenant	Jeremiah 31 Ezekiel 36-37	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Forgiveness of sins. - Indwelling of Holy Spirit - Restored relationship with God and others - Righteous living produced by God within the lives of believers. - The lordship of David's offspring. <p>Zechariah highlights the forgiveness, peace, and righteous living that is given and produced by God through Jesus Christ.</p>

What do we learn about our condition as humans from this passage?

- **We need salvation.**

This is basic to the message of the gospel—we need saving. There is no room for pride and self-righteousness in the kingdom of God. We need God to save us from the power and penalty of sin (justification). We need God to save us from the practice of sin (sanctification). And, we need God to save us from the presence of sin and all its effects (glorification). This salvation is eternally secure the moment a believer repents and believes in the Gospel, and God will bring to completion the good work that he began (Phil. 1).

- **We were born into darkness.**

We were born into sin; thus, we were born into darkness. Sin is cold, harsh, and devoid of all joy. That is what we gravitate to—our flesh loves sin. But, the only result is darkness. We cannot live in light in our own strength. We need the light of the world.

- **We cannot achieve peace in our own strength.**

Our sin caused brokenness—with God, self, others and creation. Without Christ, there is no lasting peace in this world. To live in peace is to live in Christ and in the freedom of the gospel. This cannot be achieved by ourselves. It must be produced within us.

How is the gospel revealed in this text?

The God who created the universe and led the people of Israel, manifested himself in the person of Jesus Christ and dwelt among us as the incarnate God-man, so that he could pay the penalty of sin for mankind and offer salvation that results in a life filled with light and peace to those who repent and believe in the gospel. Jesus is our joy and peace in this dark and hostile world.

How should these truths impact our lives today as believers?

- Motivated by grace, serve the Lord without fear of judgment.

There is great freedom in serving the Lord. He is a loving Father who is not waiting for us to mess up, but rejoicing over us as a dad rejoices over his child taking his first steps. We have been made right with God. We serve him in gratitude, not in a desire to earn the approval he freely gives us in Christ.

- Motivated by grace, live lives of holiness and righteousness.

This too is not to be burdensome, but freeing. God has saved us and enabled us to live in the way that which we were created—according to the word of God. All sin ever resulted in was darkness and lack of peace. God has sent his Spirit to live within us so that we might daily live in the light and peace of holiness and righteousness that has been given to us in Christ.

- Proclaim the good news of Christ to others.

John the Baptist had the unique privilege of being the one to prepare the way of Jesus. He proclaimed the salvation, light and peace that is found in Jesus. He, however, proclaimed it as a future event soon to occur. We too have been commissioned to proclaim the salvation, light and peace found in Jesus, but we proclaim it as something already accomplished. So many people are in need of salvation and living in darkness, devoid of peace—and we know the one who can meet their every need! We need to be obedient to proclaim Christ to the lost in our lives, as well as to seek out those we do not currently know so that we can share Christ with them also—not out of guilt or forced obligation, but out of the joy and gratitude that exists within us.

Life Group – *Songs of Christmas* – Dec. 16, 2018

The Angels' Song, Luke 2:10-14

CONNECT

Why do we sing praise songs at church? Why do we sing songs that celebrate the good news of the gospel?

GROW: Highlight and Explain the Text

Read Main Passage: Luke 2:10-14

(Additional Passages: 1 Tim. 1:15; 2 Cor. 1:20; Ps. 79:9; Zeph. 3:17; Gal. 2:20; Rom. 5:1, 8:6, 14:17-19)

- What do we learn about who God is and what he does from this passage?
- What do we learn about our condition as humans from this passage?
- How is the gospel revealed in this text?
- How should these truths impact our lives today as believers?

SERVE: Apply the Text

- As people who have received the good news of the gospel, share the good news of the gospel.
- As people who have peace with God through Christ, reflect that peace in your life and towards others.

PRAY: Respond to the Text

Who do we know that needs to know Jesus as Savior, Christ, and Lord?

Pray for these individuals that they would repent of their sins and believe in Jesus.

Take time to humble yourself before the Lord and repent of any unholiness or unrighteousness that has welled up in your life.

Pray for the ministry of this church and that the Spirit would anoint our efforts with his power and that there would be lost people coming to know Jesus through our gospel-sharing.

MULTIPLY: Share the Text with Others

Seek to share about the salvation, light, and peace of God found in Jesus Christ with someone this week and invite them to come to church during this Christmas season.

God sent his Son, Jesus, to come and save sinners by grace through faith, to unite them to Christ through the Spirit, and thus to all the promises of God, and to bring them under the tender leadership of his lordship so that we have eternal peace with God, all for the sake of the glory of God being revealed in this world.

For the Family: Read Luke 2:10-11 this week together as a family. Highlight how Jesus is Savior, Christ, and Lord. Share about your own experience of responding to the good news of the gospel.

MEMORIZE: Meditate on the Text

¹⁰ 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. ¹¹ For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord. (Luke 2:10-11 ESV)

Life Group – *Songs of Christmas* – Dec. 16, 2018

The Angels' Song, Luke 2:10-14

What do we learn about who God is and what he does from this passage?

- **God's good news of great joy to us is Jesus.**

When the angels proclaim to the Shepherds that they have good news, they immediately announce the birth of a person—Jesus. He is the good news of the gospel. He is the bread of life and the resurrection and the life. He fulfilled God's law and bore his wrath that we might have his righteousness and his life. Jesus not only *proclaimed* the good news of salvation to sinners, He *is* the good news. It is through faith in Jesus that we are justified, united with Christ, and receive all the benefits of salvation. He is our hope and our reward. Jesus is the good news. The angels proclaim three truths about who Jesus, the child born in the city of David, is.

- **Jesus is Savior.**

¹⁵ *The saying is trustworthy and deserving of full acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am the foremost.* (1 Timothy 1:15 ESV)

One of the foundational truths of the gospel is that Jesus saves! He is our savior, and he came to save sinners from sin. Sin is a disgusting reality that needs to be dealt with. In our arrogance and foolishness, we sinned against the holy and righteous God who created us and incurred his punishment. Jesus saves us from this sin by his grace through our faith in him. He saves us from the penalty of sin when he justifies us. He saves us from the practice of sin as he sanctifies us through the indwelling Holy Spirit. Lastly, he will save us entirely from the presence of sin and its effects when he glorifies us in the resurrection.

Jesus saves those who have faith in him from sin! This is why it makes no sense for a believer to want to continue in sin, which is why Paul writes in Romans: ¹ *What shall we say then? Are we to continue in sin that grace may abound?* ² *By no means! How can we who died to sin still live in it? ...* ⁷ *For one who has died has been set free from sin.* (Romans 6:1-2, 7 ESV) The one who has faith in Jesus for salvation lives by that faith in him, the same faith that recognized the destruction of sin and renounced that sin and turned to Jesus. So, as one lives by faith, one puts to death their sin and puts on Christ, trusting the power of the Holy Spirit who dwells within them.

- **Jesus is Christ.**

Christ is simply the Greek equivalent for the Hebrew word Messiah. The Messiah was the promised one. He was the one who God would fulfill his promises in. He was the anointed one to proclaim liberty to the captives and set the oppressed free. He was the one who was going to establish the New Covenant, where the Spirit would take up residence in the hearts of men, removing the heart of stone and replacing it with a heart of flesh. This heart of flesh would have the Law of God written on it and empowered to live by them. The Messiah would be the one to usher in God's kingdom. All the promises of God hinged on the Messiah, and the angels proclaim Jesus to be the Christ, the Messiah. Paul confirms this idea in 2 Cor. 1:20 when he writes, ²⁰ *For all the promises of God find their Yes in him. That is why it is through him that we utter our Amen to God for his glory.* (2 Corinthians 1:20 ESV). All the promises of God find their yes in him. So, when we come to Jesus in faith, the Spirit unites us with Christ, so that we become the beneficiaries of all the glorious promises of God that find their yes in Jesus because we are *in* Christ. Jesus being the Christ is good news, because now in Christ, we have a glorious inheritance yet to be revealed at his return when he establishes his eternal kingdom.

- **Jesus is Lord.**

For Jesus to be Savior, he had to be man, because only a man could take our place. But he had to also be God, because only God could meet God's demands for righteousness. Jesus is Lord is the final phrase lifted up by the Angels in this moment of joyous proclamation. Jesus is Lord means two things—first, He is God. The God who created the universe, the God who spoke to Abraham, Moses, and the prophets, He is the one who took on flesh and dwelt among us. God walked this earth. Secondly, Jesus is in control. He is Lord means that

is he is our master, our king. When we come to Jesus in faith, we don't come only to him as Savior and Christ where we are saved from punishment and are united to all the wonderful benefits of God's salvation. We also come to him as Lord. He takes over. We humbly and joyfully submit and surrender our lives to his lordship.

- **God gets the glory of the good news.**

After proclaiming this incredibly good news to the Shepherds it evokes a spontaneous and glorious expression of worship. The angels begin their song with "Glory to God in the highest", because the good news is glorifying to the Lord first and foremost. Our chief end in this life is to glorify God and enjoy him forever, because God's chief commitment is to his glory as well. His glory is the expression of his holiness, and his righteousness is committed to glorifying himself in all that he does. For him to glorify anything or anyone else would be idolatrous, and this glory is revealed most clearly in his love for us. God being about his own glory is the best thing for us. John Piper, who the ideas in the above section is credited to, succinctly puts it this way: "God aims to get all the glory in our redemption. Therefore, He is adamant that He will work for us and not we for Him. He is the workman; we stand in need of His services. He is the doctor; we are the sick patient. We are the weak; He is the strong." – John Piper, *Brothers, We are Not Professionals*, 14.

The gospel is about God's glory being on display in his deep love towards us. We get to approach him for all the glorious promises promised to us in Christ by his grace, and he gets the glory. The gospel is first and foremost about God's glory. So, let's join the angel chorus in singing "Glory to God in the highest."

- **God is *pleased* with those who believe the good news.**

God's commitment to his glory also means his commitment to our good. He desires for us to worship him because that is what is best for us. And when we come to him through faith in his Son, and are united with Christ through the Spirit, we go from being enemies of God to being people whom he is pleased with. In fact, in Zephaniah, the Lord reveals through prophecy that he exults over us with loud singing. Before we were enemies, now he rejoices over us. The Father isn't in Heaven disappointed at our many shortcomings, but he loves us like a young dad loves his first child. Not because we earned anything, but because through faith we have been united with his beloved Son, with whom he is well pleased.

What do we learn about our condition as humans from this passage?

- **We need good news and we need peace.**

You can't have good news without bad news. The bad news is that we are born into sin, totally depraved, cut off from Christ, children of wrath, bound for eternal torment. ¹⁰ *He also will drink the wine of God's wrath, poured full strength into the cup of his anger, and he will be tormented with fire and sulfur in the presence of the holy angels and in the presence of the Lamb.* ¹¹ *And the smoke of their torment goes up forever and ever, and they have no rest, day or night, these worshipers of the beast and its image, and whoever receives the mark of its name.*" (Revelation 14:10-11 ESV) This is the reality of the one cut off from Christ. If we forget the reality of the bad news of hell and the fact that we are enemies of God in need of reconciliation and peace, the "good news of the gospel simply becomes *news*." (Piper)

How is the gospel revealed in this text?

God sent his Son, Jesus, to come and save sinners by grace through faith, to unite them to Christ through the Spirit, and thus all the promises of God, and to bring them under the tender leadership of his lordship so that we have eternal peace with God all for the sake of the glory of God being revealed in this world.

How should these truths impact our lives today as believers?

- As people who have received the good news of the gospel, share the good news of the gospel. Good news is meant to be shared. So, go and share the glorious gospel!
- As people who have peace with God through Christ, reflect that peace in your life and towards others. In Christ, peace with God is an objective reality that begins to express itself in the subjective expression of inner peace within oneself and the pursuit of peace with others.

Life Group – *Songs of Christmas* – Dec. 23, 2018

Simeon's Song, Luke 2:25-35

CONNECT

Why is it difficult to love people well who are different than us in any number of ways? What is the remedy?

GROW: Highlight and Explain the Text

Read Main Passage: Luke 2:25-35

(Additional Passages: Mt. 28:18-20; Gen. 12:1-3; Rom. 15:14-21; Gal. 3:24-29; Col. 3:1-17; Rev. 7:9)

- What do we learn about who God is and what he does from this passage?
- What do we learn about our condition as humans from this passage?
- How is the gospel revealed in this text?
- How should these truths impact our lives today as believers?

SERVE: Apply the Text

- As recipients of God's free gift of salvation, *Live on mission*, carrying the message of salvation to all peoples.
 - As members of the family of God by grace through faith, *pursue racial diversity*, gloriously displaying the image of God in our congregation.
 - As members of the family of God by grace through faith, *pursue racial harmony*, humbly yielding to the Holy Spirit who is at work to produce unity within the church.
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PRAY: Respond to the Text

Who do we know that needs to know Jesus as Savior, Christ, and Lord?

Pray for these individuals that they would repent of their sins and believe in Jesus.

Take time to humble yourself before the Lord and repent of any unholiness or unrighteousness that has welled up in your life.

Pray for the ministry of this church and that the Spirit would anoint our efforts with his power and that there would be lost people coming to know Jesus through our gospel-sharing.

MULTIPLY: Share the Text with Others

Seek to share about the salvation of God found in Jesus Christ with someone *who is different either racially, culturally, or economically than you* this week and invite them to come to church during this Christmas season.

Jesus shed his blood on the cross so that salvation would be experienced by all nations of the earth, revealing his glory through the diversity of his church and the harmony produced by his Spirit.

For the Family: Read Luke 2:29-32 this week together as a family. Highlight how Jesus provides salvation for all peoples. Have an honest conversation about racism and prejudice and how it is harmful and not of Christ.

MEMORIZE: Meditate on the Text

¹⁰ 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. ¹¹ For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord. (Luke 2:10-11 ESV)

Life Group – *Songs of Christmas* – Dec. 23, 2018

Simeon's Song, Luke 2:25-35

What do we learn about who God is and what he does from this passage?

- **Salvation, revealed in the person of Jesus Christ, comes from the Father to all peoples.**

It was always in the plan of God to provide salvation for all the nations, or tribes, or peoples, or families of the earth. From the very beginning he promised Abraham that “[through him] all the families of the earth would be blessed” (Gen. 12:3). Unfortunately, by Jesus’ day Israel had forgotten their chief purpose—to reveal God’s glory to the nations that they too might come to know him. They chose nationalism over the command of God. Simeon, however, was a man of faith, a man upon whom rested the Holy Spirit. So, when he sees Jesus, who he immediately recognizes to be the Christ, he bursts out in praise, and he highlights that the salvation the Christ will prepare will be light for the Gentiles and glory for the people of Israel. There was no nationalism in him. He knew that God’s scope was global. Matthew and Luke both conclude with a commission to take the gospels to all the nations. Acts begins with the commission to take the gospel to all nations, and we read how the Holy Spirit works through Peter, Paul, and the church to accomplish that purpose. God’s salvation is for all peoples, white, black, Asian, Arab, African, Hispanic, Native American, Indian, etc. No one is outside the scope of God’s saving love. In fact, before Jesus returns, the gospel will be preached and believed in all tribes and nations on this earth because, one, Jesus said it to be so in Matthew 24:14 and, two, this is the picture we see in Revelation 7:9:

⁹ *After this I looked, and behold, a great multitude that no one could number, from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed in white robes, with palm branches in their hands,* ¹⁰ *and crying out with a loud voice, "Salvation belongs to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb!"* (Revelation 7:9-10 ESV)

God will accomplish his purpose of growing his church among the nations. His salvation is the light for the Gentiles and the glory of Israel. Will we as a Life Group be faithful to join him in his mission? Will our love for the glory of God and our love for others move us to share this light with others around the world?

- **This salvation came at a great price.**

This joyful praise turns to a solemn prophecy. Jesus would be opposed by his own people and Mary would be pierced in her soul as Jesus was in his body. The salvation of the Lord came at the price of the blood of the Lamb of God. Woe to us if we cheapen his grace by not living in submission to Christ’s lordship. Woe to us if we profane the blood of Christ by withholding the gospel from people who are different racially, economically, or culturally. God’s grace is utterly free, but it will cost you everything. God’s grace is received as a free gift through faith and as a result our mindset should be that of Paul’s, “I have been crucified with Christ, it is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God who loved me and gave himself for me” (Galatians 2:20).

Let us never forget the price that was paid to secure our salvation, and live, not as a way to pay back grace, but in joyful worship, in response to the glorious approval we now have in Christ. When we live this way, we find ourselves living as disciples of Christ and the barriers found in the world between people are torn down by the gospel.

What do we learn about our condition as humans from this passage?

- **Our “people” are just as in need of the salvation God provides as other “peoples.”**

We are all born in need of the gospel, because we are all desperately sinful and in need of the salvation provided by God. People from all nations equally receive the promises of the Covenant in Christ. No one has superior standing before the Lord. We all need Jesus, and it is just as much of a miracle when a 7-year old American comes to faith in Christ as when a Muslim man comes to faith in Christ. Salvation comes from the Lord through the faithful ministry of the Spirit through the church and the family. The only difference is the

American hears the gospel multiple times a year, if not multiple times a month, while the Muslim man living in his home country may only hear it a few times in his life.

How is the gospel revealed in this text?

Jesus shed his blood on the cross so that salvation would be experienced by all nations of the earth, revealing his glory through the diversity of his church and the harmony produced by his Spirit.

How should these truths impact our lives today as believers?

- As recipients of God's free gift of salvation, *live on mission*, carrying the message of salvation to all peoples.

A word from our Missions' Pastor, Mike Niemi: "So how does this look in our daily lives? It begins with a biblical worldview that acknowledges that all people have been created in the image of God and therefore have intrinsic value instilled into them by their Creator. And His purpose for them, as for us, is to live in relationship with us in such a way that we, as His image-bearers, reflect His glory to the nations so that many will become disciples and worshipers of Him. Let us therefore, open our eyes as we go throughout our daily lives and see the people who are around us. Go through your daily routine with open eyes and see the nations that the Lord has brought across our paths here in Gadsden and has given us access and opportunities to build Gospel-centered relationships with. We have on-ramps built in at MeadowBrook for you to build those type relationships with international students at Gadsden State (where around 35 countries are represented every semester). But beyond that, look at the gas stations and restaurants or doctor's offices or nail salons or a host of other businesses where you will run into people from a wide variety of nations, that have permanently immigrated to Gadsden, Alabama. Keep your ears open when you are at the grocery store or other parts of town to hear different languages being spoken and know that the Lord has brought them to our city for us, His Church, to engage them with the Gospel because for many of them, they didn't have an opportunity to hear about Jesus where they are from.

Beyond these things, know that MeadowBrook has partnerships just about on every continent in the world and among areas that play host to most of the major religious worldviews. If you are interested in linking arms with us to reach the nations in a different place, sign up to be part of one of our global teams around the world in order to bring the name of Jesus to those who haven't heard before and are in desperate need of the Savior." You can start by checking out the missions page at mbchurch.com or talking with Mike on Sundays or emailing him during the week (mike@mbchurch.com).

- As members of the family of God by grace through faith, *pursue racial diversity*, gloriously displaying the image of God in our congregation.
- As members of the family of God by grace through faith, *pursue racial harmony*, humbly yielding to the Holy Spirit who is at work to produce unity within the church.

It may be easy to brush through those last two application points, but I encourage you to ponder them. It is a costly endeavor, and we are at a time in our country where the light of the racial diversity and harmony within the church needs to shine brighter than ever. Prayerfully ponder these two questions posed by John Piper in his book, *Brothers We are Not Professionals*, and ask God for wisdom, endurance and love in the Lord.

- "Are our churches thermometers registering the racial attitudes and actions of the world; or are they thermostats raising the warmth of commitment to racial understanding and love and demonstrable harmony?" (233).
- "The design of the atonement is racial diversity in the company of the redeemed...[If it] cost the Father and the Son such a price, should we expect that it will cost us nothing? Or that it will be easy? No, the devil, who hates the glory of God and despises the aims of the cross, will not relent without a fierce battle... It will be so costly that many will try it for a while and then give up and walk away from the effort to easier things." (237-238).

Life Group – Songs of Christmas – Dec. 30, 2018

Wedding Song, Revelation 19:6-10

CONNECT

What are you hoping for in 2019? Is it motivated and grounded by the hope that we have in Jesus? How can we engage in 40 Days of a Renewal in a way that is motivated by and increases the hope that we have in Jesus?

GROW: Highlight and Explain the Text

Read Main Passage: Revelation 19:6-10

(Additional Passages: Mt. 22:1-14; Zech. 14:5-21; Ps. 16; 1 Thess. 5:16-18; 2 Cor. 4-5; Rom. 8)

- What do we learn about who God is and what he does from this passage?
- What do we learn about our condition as humans from this passage?
- How is the gospel revealed in this text?
- How should these truths impact our lives today as believers?

SERVE: Apply the Text

- As the people of God, worship God.
- As followers of the God at whose right hand are pleasures forevermore, *pursue joy in Christ*.
- As those whose righteousness is given to us as a free gift through faith, *pursue righteousness*, humbly yielding to the Holy Spirit who is at work to produce righteousness within the church.
- Abound in hope.

PRAY: Respond to the Text

Who do we know that needs to know Jesus as Savior, Christ, and Lord?

Pray for these individuals that they would repent of their sins and believe in Jesus.

Take time to humble yourself before the Lord and repent of any unholiness or unrighteousness that has welled up in your life.

Pray for the ministry of this church and that the Spirit would anoint our efforts with his power and that there would be lost people coming to know Jesus through our gospel-sharing.

MULTIPLY: Share the Text with Others

Seek to share about the secure hope we have from God found in Jesus Christ with someone and invite them to join you as you seek to begin the intentional pursuit of lasting renewal in Christ during 40 Days of Renewal.

God meets our deepest needs in Christ and is working in us to produce righteousness until he returns and completes our salvation in glorification, where we will rejoice in him and worship him always.

For the Family: Read Rev. 19:6-10 this week together as a family. Talk about what it means to Worship God and find our joy and satisfaction in him, not earthly things.

MEMORIZE: Meditate on the Text

¹⁰ 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. ¹¹ For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord. (Luke 2:10-11 ESV)

Life Group – Songs of Christmas – Dec. 30, 2018

Wedding Song, Revelation 19:6-10

What do we learn about who God is and what he does from this passage?

- **The Lord our God, the Almighty, reigns.**

The story began in Genesis with God reigning over all of creation perfectly, and the story will end that way as well. There is hardly a truth that is clearer throughout Scripture than this one. The Lord, the God who makes covenant with sinful people in order to redeem them in Christ, is our God. No one else or nothing else can fill that role. Only he can. He is the Almighty, the all-powerful one who accomplishes every one of his purposes. Nothing is too powerful for him. And he reigns as King. All things are subject to him, even those who rebel against God operate within the realm of God's Sovereignty (i.e. Job, Rom. 13, Cyrus, etc.). The Lord reigns. Life goes well when we live under his reign. It is what we were designed to do, which is why it is the praise that is on the people's lips that *we who are in Christ will sing one day*. Think about it, in John's vision into the future reality of Heaven, we who are in Christ are somewhere in this great multitude singing this praise. "Hallelujah! For the Lord our God the Almighty reigns." It is not a laborious thing when God reigns over his people, rather it is a glorious thing to live under his reign.

- **The Lord, not us or angels, is the recipient of glory and praise and worship.**

The story is about him. It is his holiness that is on display, and we simply share in it. He is worthy of all glory and honor and praise. It is not about us. God opposes the proud because the proud seek to take for themselves the glory that is due only to him. God hates idolatry because idolatry takes the glory that is due to the Creator and gives it to creature. God (Father, Son, Spirit) will not share his glory with another, because he is righteous and to do so would be idolatry, which is impossible for God to do. Part of living out the eternal life we have already is engaging in deep, heartfelt, personal and corporate worship and praise of our God, which Romans 12 extends to cover all of our life. Our life needs to consistently reveal and give back to God the glory that is already his.

- **The Lord grants it to his Bride, the church, to be ready and properly clothed in righteousness.**

The garments here are the righteous deeds of the saints. They have already been washed white by the blood of the Lamb through faith (Rev. 7), and that faith was revealed in righteous acts on earth. Works vindicate faith. But these works of righteousness are granted to us in Christ. His Spirit indwells within all believers and begins working in them to produce holiness (putting to death sin) and godliness (putting on the characteristics of Christ or revealing the fruit of the Spirit). Even in the Christian life lived post-justification, it is lived by grace through faith in Jesus. Apart from him we can do nothing. We can't pay him back for the grace that he shows us. The righteous deeds he produces in us is an act of grace itself. Sin is destructive, and he graciously enables us to no longer live under sin's tyranny, but to live in the joyous freedom of his righteousness.

What do we learn about our condition as humans from this passage?

- **We are created to live under the reign of God and pursue our greatest joy in him.**

This song reveals what we were created for—living under Christ's Lordship and unceasing joy—all for the glory of God. The phrase "Let us rejoice and exult" means in both the Greek and the English: Let us rejoice and exceedingly rejoice. The pursuit of our personal joy and happiness is not contrary to our pursuit of Christ. If we pursue our greatest joy, we are pursuing Christ. If we pursue Christ, we are pursuing our greatest joy. Oftentimes, Jesus points his disciples to the eternal reward as a motivation for obedience today, pointing to both our salvation and the rewards that will be given for faithfulness.

Our chief end in this world is to glorify God and enjoy him forever. Paul says to rejoice always and David said at the Lord's right hand are pleasures forevermore. God wants us to experience joy in this world, but joy is not found in the fleeting pleasures of sin, but rather in the knowing and living out the truth of God's word. We don't serve God out of mere duty, though he could rightfully command us to do so, the Christian delights in the service of God. The joy of the Lord is his strength. This is the picture we see in Heaven: pure and utter joy. In Heaven, our joy will be always increasing, yet always full. It will be a place full of excitement and discovery of who God is. Each day will bring about even higher and deeper feelings of ecstasy in the Lord our God.

Unfortunately, sin has temporarily broken this reality in the world we now live. We rebel against God's reign, seek joy in worldly things, and seek to steal God's glory from him. As C.S. Lewis puts it, "We are foolish creatures... We are far too easily pleased." We need to be restored by Christ in order to begin to live out this heavenly reality today.¹

- **We need it to be granted to us to clothe ourselves in the right clothes—righteous deeds of the saints.**

We simply cannot achieve righteousness. It must be given to us in Christ and produced within us by the Spirit. Apart from Jesus we can do nothing. Everything we have in this life is a gift from God. The ministry we do, the righteousness we pursue, all of it is God's gift to us.

How is the gospel revealed in this text?

God meets our deepest needs in Christ and is working in us to produce righteousness until he returns and completes our salvation in glorification, where we will rejoice in him and worship him always.

How should these truths impact our lives today as believers?

- As the people of God, worship God. With your life, worship him. With your family, worship him. With your work, worship him. With your study of God's word, worship him. With your prayers, worship him. With all that you are, worship God.
- As followers of the God at whose right hand are pleasures forevermore, *pursue joy in Christ*. Actively seek out your greatest joy in Christ. Remind yourself of your eternal reward, look to it and be renewed in your inner self though this tent we live in is wasting away. Christ has come to give you abundant life, find it in him. So, pursue joy.
- As those whose righteousness is given to us as a free gift through faith, *pursue righteousness*, humbly yielding to the Holy Spirit who is at work to produce righteousness within the church. We must rely on God through faith for righteousness, but he expects us to be active as well in its pursuit. The pursuit of righteousness in the Christian life is both a passive and active approach. It is passive because apart from Christ we can do nothing, but it is active because by the power of the Spirit, we are the ones commanded to put to death the deeds of the flesh. We are the ones commanded to walk by the Spirit. We must discipline ourselves and pursue righteousness by faith in the Son of God with whom we have been crucified and raised to walk in newness of life. So, pursue righteousness.
- Abound in hope. We know how the story ends. Our hope is secure. God will bring this about. *May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that by the power of the Holy Spirit you may **abound in hope**.* (Romans 15:13)

¹ Ideas and some wording borrowed from John Piper's arguments for Christian Hedonism.