

THE GOOD NEWS
ACCORDING TO

Luke

SECTION IV

WEEKS 17-19

WEEK 17:

GREETINGS, O FAVORED ONE!

PRIMARY SCRIPTURE:

Luke 1:26-38

RELATED SCRIPTURES:

Matthew 1:18-25; Luke 8:19-21,
John 19:25-27, Hebrews 11

“[Mary] discovered that for those who trust God, he uses soul-piercing events to unleash more grace, salvation, and joy into the world than we could have ever imagined. As God works out his salvation of sinners, he leads us along unexpected paths that result in unexpected and sometimes agonizing pain. When it does, we can remember Mary. The darkest moment of her life, the sword that stabbed deepest into her soul, was the moment that God used most to bring salvation and joy to the world — and to *her*! That’s how he works with us too. When the sword pierces, all it feels like is terrible pain. But later we discover that our deepest wounding often becomes the channel through which the most profound grace flows.”

- Jon Bloom

“Prosperity cannot be the proof of God’s favor, since it is what the devil promises to those who worship him.”

- John Piper

PERSONAL STUDY:

Read Luke 1:26-28. If you were visited by an angel and told that God's favor and blessing were upon you, what would you think that might mean for your life moving forward?

Read Luke 2:33-35, 8:19-21, John 19:25-27. What would Mary have experienced during these painful events? Why does God's favor and blessing not always equate to a pain-free, easy existence with positive circumstances?

Read Hebrews 11:32-38. This list of faithful servants of God includes people who saw incredible miracles and people who suffered incredible pain. Where in your life has faithfulness led to unexpected success and joy? Where has faithfulness led to pain or struggle?

Read Luke 1:29-38. In what ways does Mary's response to Gabriel match how you would expect a normal human being to react to meeting an angel? How does Gabriel respond to her skepticisms? When has obedience to God's direction in your life required humility and faith?

SERMON NOTES:

LIFEGROUP DISCUSSION:

What types of things take the majority of your thoughts and energy throughout the holidays?

Read Luke 1:26-28 and Ephesians 1:3-4. When have you felt God's blessing and favor most fully in your life? How does the example of Mary's life point us to a new understanding of God's favor and blessing?

What did Mary give and sacrifice as part of God's plan to save sinners around the world through the death and resurrection of her son Jesus?

Read 1 Peter 2:21-25, 1 Peter 3:13-4:2 and Hebrews 12:1-4. In light of the mission of helping people take next steps toward Jesus, what are real life ways that Jesus can turn our suffering and pain into helpful tools?

WEEK 18:

THE KING'S LOWLY ENTOURAGE

PRIMARY SCRIPTURE:

Luke 2:1-21

RELATED SCRIPTURES:

Isaiah 9:1-7, Micah 5:2, Philippians 2:1-11,
Galatians 4:4-5, Revelation 21:1-5

“We are not out of the way of divine visits when we are sensibly employed in an honest calling, and abide with God in it.”

– Matthew Henry

“The most significant gifts in the church’s life in every era are ordinary natural abilities sanctified.”

- J.I. Packer

PERSONAL STUDY:

Read Micah 5:2, Isaiah 9:1-7 and Luke 2:1-7. Consider the prophecies from Isaiah 9:1-7 and Micah 5:2. How do you see these fulfilled in Jesus' birth?

When have you seen God fulfill promises in your life? When are you most tempted to believe that your proficiency or performance are required for you to earn God's faithfulness?

Imagine the reality of giving birth in a manger and laying a newborn in an animal's feeding trough. What kind of real life problems did Mary and Joseph face as a young couple?

Read Luke 2:8-20. What kind of people are shepherds? What do you know of farming lifestyle? Would shepherds have been likely guests for a king's birth? Why or why not?

Read Philippians 2:1-11. Jesus descended from the highest glory of heaven to the low of taking human form complete with a birth in a barn and an entourage of farmers to celebrate. How does God's humility reveal His glory? How do our insecurities prevent us from being willing to humble ourselves?

SERMON NOTES:

LIFEGROUP DISCUSSION:

What kind of people do you gravitate toward? Why? What characteristics make you respect and want to spend time with someone? What characteristics repel you from someone?

Read Luke 2:8-14. What is the significance of God inviting small-time, blue collar, lowly shepherds to be the celebrating crowd at one of the greatest, most important and glorious events in the history of the world? What things make me feel significant?

Read Isaiah 7:14 and Revelation 21:1-5. How do we seek to define our identity from the people around us? How do God's promises in the gospel free us up to associate with anyone, regardless of what they offer to our social standing?

Read Luke 2:19. What kind of things do you ponder or think deeply about? What do you find yourself daydreaming about?

How can we practically encourage each other to think deeply on Jesus' humility in his birth, life and death throughout the busyness of the Christmas season?

WEEK 19:

THE HOLY FIRST BORN

PRIMARY SCRIPTURE:

Luke 2:22-40

RELATED SCRIPTURES:

Isaiah 49:6 + 66:1-3, John 4:21-24,
Romans 5:12-21 + 9:4-5, Colossians 1:13-18

“The resurrection and incarnation of Jesus opens the door to ... the powerful, mysterious presence of the God of Israel, the creator God, bringing Israel's story to its climax by doing a new thing, bringing the story of creation to its height by a new creation from the womb of the old.”

- N.T. Wright, “God’s Way of Acting”

PERSONAL STUDY:

Have you witnessed a young couple (yourself or friends or family members) giving birth to a child? What kind of thoughts, fears and events do new parents in the first few months of a baby's life?

Read Luke 2:22-24 and Leviticus 12. The offering of two turtledoves or pigeons was a provision in the law for those who could not afford a more expensive customary lamb. What difficulties in travel did this poor young couple likely experience? What do we learn about Mary and Joseph's devotion to God?

Read Luke 2:33-35. Simeon's prophecy can be paraphrased as: "This boy will expose the hearts of those who pretend to be holy and those who fear they'll never be holy enough. He will show us all our need for salvation. He himself will be that salvation, and you, mother, will suffer because he will suffer. It will be like a sword piercing your own soul." After all Mary and Joseph have experienced in the first weeks of Jesus' life, how would that prophecy sit with them?

Read Luke 2:25-32 and 36-38. Simeon and Anna have been praying and waiting their entire lives for the coming Messiah. Has anyone in your life been praying for you for years? What prayers do you hope will mark your life over the years? What are things you currently pray about on a regular basis?

SERMON NOTES:

LIFEGROUP DISCUSSION:

Read Exodus 13:1-2, Luke 2:22-24, Colossians 1:13-20 and Romans 8:29. What is the significance of the firstborn male in a Jewish family? What are the implications of Jesus being the new patriarch for a new humanity?

Read 2 Corinthians 5:16-17. What kind of sinful traits and family patterns did you inherit with your first human nature? How have you seen Jesus redeem you as a new creation and part of his new humanity?

Read Luke 2:25-32 and Romans 8:18-25. Simeon's patient longing culminates in seeing God's salvation come in the form of a baby whose name means salvation. What forms of brokenness (personal, communal and global) wear you out as you wait for Jesus' promised second coming to restore all things and put a final end to sin and death?

Read Luke 2:25-38 and Revelation 21:1-8. How as a Lifegroup do we need to focus our hearts on responding to Jesus in worship and anticipation of His return? What are specific ways we commit to seeing Jesus and His salvation in the busyness of the next few weeks?