



# REJOICE IN THE BIRTH OF THE KING

Read aloud the passages for this week:

LUKE 2:1-20



## LOOKING BACK TO LAST WEEK

Provide support, encouragement, and accountability to one another for putting the Word of God into practice. Together, find ways to live out the Scripture.

- **What did the Holy Spirit impress upon you from last week's study?**
- **What, if anything, got in the way of you living out the Word of God studied last week? For example, how difficult do you find it to be fully dependent on God? How willing are you to be used by God to help others?**

## Head

OBSERVE THE TEXT AND THE AUTHOR'S MAIN POINTS.

1. Discuss the implications of the “ordinariness” of Jesus’ birth.
2. When the angel appeared to the shepherds, what was their reaction? How does this harmonize with artistic depictions of angels and nativity scenes with angels?
3. What were the two key elements of the angel’s address to the shepherds?
4. Explore Mary’s response in v. 19. What does this mean?<sup>5</sup>

## Heart

ENVISION HOW THE TEXT—WHEN APPLIED—MIGHT TRANSFORM YOUR INNER LIFE IN TERMS OF YOUR THOUGHTS, ATTITUDES, AND BEHAVIORS.

1. The sermon series during Advent, *Let Heaven and Nature Sing*, is built around the notion of rejoicing, or joy. In v. 10 and following, shepherds take an emotional journey from fear to celebration and great joy, a theme throughout Luke’s birth narrative.<sup>6</sup> Pray that God will fill you with the same sense of wonder and joy as you contemplate during this season the miracle of Jesus’ birth.
2. As you read God’s Word and “ponder” its meaning, do you “treasure it up in your heart” and let it affect you deeply?

## Hands

APPLY THE TEXT BY MOVING FROM INWARD REFLECTION TO OUTWARD ACTION LOOKING FOR WAYS TO LIVE THE TEXT OUT IN OUR LIVES. THESE ARE SPECIFIC, CONCRETE EXAMPLES BUT THEY ARE NOT THE ONLY WAY—THEY ARE IDEA-STARTERS FOR HOW TO PUT THE WORD OF GOD INTO PRACTICE.

## Reaching Upwards: Growing in Your Relationship with God

- In v. 1 God uses the decree of a pagan monarch to orchestrate the fulfillment of His Word. Commentators point out several other details in this birth account that fulfill Old Testament Scripture.<sup>7</sup> Discuss how this birth account fills you with a new appreciation of a God who is in charge of every detail of history.
- The first announcement of the Savior's birth is by an angel to shepherds. They were the first non-family members to see Jesus in person (v.16), and the first to spread the word about what they had seen (v.17). How is the shepherd's response to this news a model for our response to the grace of God? What is the Holy Spirit prompting you to do as a result?

## Reaching Outward: Investing in Your Neighbors

- Be intentionally invitational. Invite your friends and neighbors to one (or more) of the many Advent events at FPC. This includes the multiple Christmas Eve worship services for all ages, family configurations, and worship style preferences.
- Pray that those who attend the FPC Christmas Eve Mixer will enjoy conversations with new people and feel a sense of warmth and welcome there. Pray that people who are alone for the holidays will find comfort and friendships. Pray for those who concluded Fall Alpha on December 21, that God will open their eyes to see the hope of Christ.

## Reaching Beyond

- As you look to the New Year, calendar the January 25, 2024, (12-1 PM) opportunity to learn more about FPC local ministry partner, Prestige Learning Institute (PLI). This Institute offers accessible resources in the context of deep and trusting relationships so that refugee families can know true peace in Houston. Contact Madie Weir, Missions Coordinator at [mweir@fpchouston.org](mailto:mweir@fpchouston.org) to RSVP or for more information about this field trip.
- Volunteer opportunities with one of FPC's local ministry partners are updated regularly. Make it a 2024 habit to visit [fpchouston.org/serve](https://fpchouston.org/serve) regularly and participate in opportunities to be the hands and feet of Jesus in Houston.




---

## GOSPEL-CENTERED PARENTING TAKE-AWAY

---

What an ordinary way to be born! The Creator of the universe who holds all things together, born in a manger, wrapped in normal cloths? And the angels, declaring the Good News to dirty, tired, smelly shepherds, men going about their everyday, ordinary lives? Yes. This is the God we follow. One who meets us in the most ordinary moments of our days. And it is here that He says, "I AM." Do you believe God cares about your everyday, ordinary moments with your children? When is it hard to believe Jesus wants to be

present? Why is that? How does this story help you reimagine where Jesus wants to be with you? This week, take time to talk to your kids about Jesus' desire to be with them in the most ordinary of tasks. Maybe begin the conversation asking them to share the most boring parts of their day, then to share the most exciting parts of their day. Next, ask if they think Jesus cares about any of these moments. See what responses you get from your kids as you talk about Jesus' desire to meet us where we are in our days. Notice what response you get from your own heart at the magnitude of this truth. Then spend time thanking God for His presence.