



**ADVENT BOOKLET
GII HIT 2022**

English Version

Grace

the Dominant Note of Christmas



Our journey through the advent weeks is a spiritual journey that will open our eyes more and more to the beauty and wonder of God's grace through Christ. Christ's birth into the world is a manifestation of God's grace in His most perfect and most evident form. The focal point of Christmas is clear – it is the grace of God. As John said, “For from his fullness we have all received, grace upon grace.” (John 1:16). The purpose of the incarnate Word is to declare the grace of God, the pinnacle of which is exhibited on Christ's redemptive work upon the cross of Calvary (John 3:16). It is the greatest declaration of God's love of the world.

This booklet is arranged as a guidance for us to journey through the beauty of God's grace and how it affects our daily lives through every week's reflections. On the **first week of advent**, we are asked to reflect and contemplate on the grace of God. On the **second week of advent**, we will be reminded theologically that the grace of God pushes us to walk in the holy light of God. On the **third week of advent**, a testimony will

emphasize that living in grace is to live a life filled with overflowing joy that will not be crushed no matter how challenging life can be. Lastly, on the **fourth week of advent**, God's grace shall move every believer to take real actions to declare their love to the weak, the frail, the marginalized and the forgotten. Compassionate hearts and all forms of service done to provide care and welfare for them is fundamentally a fight for justice.

Grace

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Advent I
27 November 2022

Contemplation

Diving into God's Benevolence



One of the unique characteristics of Mary, mother of Jesus Christ Our Lord, is that she “treasured up all these things in her heart” (see Luke 2:19, 51), in other words, contemplating.

Entering the weeks of Advent, we will follow Mary's example in her contemplation through the part that we have read, from Luke 1:28. But, we will try to contemplate through imagining ourselves not as Mary, but putting ourselves in the shoes of the angel who was tasked to declare the birth of the Messiah.

Imagine that you, an angel, are in heaven with the Triune God who is Almighty and Holy. Together with God, you look down, witnessing the brokenness of the world. The rich oppressing the poor, the poor and neglected surviving by stealing. The young living in rebellion, the old living full of superiority and hubris. The murderers, the thieves, the rapists, the liars, their wickedness runs rampant. The idolators are not

seeking the one true God; instead, they create false idols in their own image and likeness. What about the church leaders? Are they better? No. They are corrupt, living in hypocrisy.

You think to yourself, "These wicked people – it is useless to let them live. It is much better to annihilate them. It would be a piece of cake for God to make new creations, isn't it?"

How surprised you are when God, the Father Almighty, creator of Heaven and Earth, instead of obliterating these godless men, God says to His only Son whom He loved that it is time to descend into the world and save these men. You are even more shocked when He commands you to bring this news to a young virgin that He has chosen to be the mother of the Son of God. What is the chosen maiden like? She is not a princess living in a royal castle adorned with jewelry. She is a simple country girl from Nazareth. Then you understand that the Son of God is not sent to live a comfortable and abundant life on earth, but to lead a life equal with those who are weak, suffering, despised.

You protest to the Father Almighty. Why would He sacrifice His only Son for the sake of these

rebels? Even more so, choosing measly Mary to give birth and raise the Son of God? Even Moses had the Pharaoh's daughter as his stepmother. How could the Son of God be the son of some unknown country bumpkin? But your task is to just do as commanded. So, you say to the peasant girl, still in awe at God's incomprehensible grace, "Greetings, you who are highly favored! The Lord is with you."

When we visualize ourselves in the situation, then only we realize that the greeting from the angel is not merely saying hello, not just idle chit-chat, but a fact that should shake us awake from our spiritual apathy. Not just Mary, all of us who have received the gift of salvation are the "highly favored". Even if we contemplate this fact for the 70-80 years of our lives, the mystery of God's love through the incarnation of Christ should constantly fill our undeserving selves with wonder and thanksgiving of His grace.

Don't waste the season of Advent and Christmas this year by treating it as just a customary routine. Let us awaken from lukewarm spirituality that tends to make our hearts grow cold. Before we enter the busyness of the various

Christmas programs and services, let us take a moment to reflect and be amazed of God's love.

Reflection :

- Has the Christmas season been just a customary routine for you so far?
- Do you want to use the Christmas season this year to wholeheartedly contemplate on His love?

Advent II
4 December 2022

Holiness

Walking in the Holy Light



In the Old Testament, God wants His people to lead a holy life (Lev 20:7). In the New Testament, this does not change (1 Pet. 1:13-16). But, who amongst men is capable to live righteously and be holy?

Holiness is God's attribute. Only God is truly holy, because only God is the absolute light in which there is no speck of darkness. Therefore, holiness is not a fundamental element of mankind, who is limited and sinful. Holiness cannot be obtained through human's efforts, let alone through religious practices.

So, how can men be called holy and obtain holiness? In the book *The Holiness of God*, R.C. Sproul said, "We are holy because we have been consecrated to God. We have been set apart. We have been called to live a life that is different."

It is clear that man's holiness is a gift from God, where we who believed in Jesus Christ have been

separated from the world and our status fundamentally changed. From living in the darkness of sin, we now live in the light of Christ (John 12:46).

Even though in essence man's holiness is only obtained through the grace and work of God, holiness is also a call that we should constantly live out in the light of the Holy Spirit who moves us, empowers us, and perfects us. We, whose status have been fundamentally consecrated by Christ, are still called to live righteously, steadily progressing, radiating the light of Christ with our whole lives. As John Calvin once said, "Because the Father has reconciled us to Himself in Christ, therefore He commands us to be conformed to Christ as to our pattern."

Because Jesus Christ, the true Light, has descended into the world, we can become holy. We can be called children of light, and we are empowered to live out God's calling to lead a holy life.

Reflection :

- Have you given thanks for the presence of Christ that has consecrated you through the light of His grace?
- Have you been leading a life that constantly radiate holiness to glorify God?

Advent III
11 December 2022

Rejoicing

The Indestructible Dawn of Joy



The joy of Christmas is a familiar term for many Christians. We have heard many sermons on this topic, that we lost count. Strangely, when the days are rough, we sometimes do not experience this joy. Yes, the month of December will be filled with so many colorful festive decorations; our ears will be pampered by the Christmas songs played in the background. We can sense this momentary burst of happiness when we immerse ourselves in the celebrations. But when we return back to our normal lives, when all the unresolved impending task resurfaces again, this happiness suddenly vaporizes. If only everything can go well - we can remain healthy, we do not have to mourn over the loss of our loved ones; this joy of Christmas might last longer, right? But, is it true that we can only be joyful when everything goes well? After all, there are people who have everything they want but they remain unhappy. Should our joy always be determined by the kind of conditions we are in?

When the angel of the Lord appeared to the shepherds, the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid. I bring you good news that will cause great joy for all the people. Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is the Messiah, the Lord." (Luk 2:10-11). The greatest joy comes about because Jesus the Messiah has been born to us. For success, fame, abundance will be meaningless, will not grant us the true, genuine joy without the presence of Christ. Our lives will end up in eternal suffering, as a consequence of our sin. Even as we continue with our lives on earth, there will not be peace as long as we remain in enmity with the Holy GOD. It is exactly because we have been reconciled with GOD through Jesus Christ that we can enjoy eternity with God. Isn't this the true joy?

The kind of joy that is distinct from the effervescent, situation-dependent happiness. This joy will not disappear over time, because God's people from all eras will experience the joy in Christ (1 Pet 2:8). The kind of joy that will not be destroyed by evil (1 Thes 1:6), as evident by the many Christians who remain faithful even as they experience tremendous burden. The kind of joy that will not be eroded by suffering, illness, the

lost of our loved ones. Without Christ, there will not be this kind of joy.

One day, a Pastor decided to visit one of the congregation members – a grandmother that struggled with body weaknesses and memory lost. She frequently repeated what she said. Her body was so weak that she needed a special device to help her stand up. Her children were busy with their own families and would only come to visit her every once in a while. The Pastor asked this grandmother, “I guess there are many things you can no longer remember, Mdm.” This grandmother nodded in agreement. However, the Pastor continued, “but there is one thing that I am sure you will always remember.” The grandmother smiled and shared, “Yes, I will never forget Jesus Christ, the LORD that has saved and protected me.” Unpleasant situations, memory loss, weakening body, will never take away her joy in Christ who has saved and will continue to be with her always.

Reflection :

Remember whatever joy that you look for outside Christ, will not be long lasting. If today you feel unhappy or dissatisfied with your life, think about the saving act of Christ, who has decided to come into your life, so that you can experience this true, genuine joy in Him.

Advent IV

18 December 2022

Social Justice

The fullness of Love
manifested into Actions



The birth of Christ brings good news to the dark and dying world, especially because sin (along with all the problems it yields), continues to intimidate and wreck our lives. This good news is proclaimed by Christ himself, as he declared that He is the "Lord's Servant" that Isaiah alluded to in his prophecy. "18 "The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to set the oppressed free, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor." (Luk. 4:18-19; cf. Is. 61:1).

Without underplaying the essence of His salvific act in the forgiveness of our sin (Mat 1:21; Luk. 2:11-12; 19:10), Jesus' attention to the poor, the oppressed, those ostracized, abandoned, or forgotten; demonstrates divine attributes and commitment to the marginalized (Ps. 146:7-9; Deut. 10:17-18). God shows his solidarity to the

helpless ones through the presence of His Son – perhaps most clearly and concretely seen when Jesus fed the hungry, healed the blind and the paralyzed, raised the widow's dead son, defended the woman caught in adultery, served the Samaritan woman, showed his concern for the little children when the disciples turned them away. Jesus stayed, ate, interacted with those socially outcast. After all, this is the very purpose of his coming to the world, as prophesied by Isaiah. To proclaim the good news to the poor and oppressed, and to bring about healing and restore wholeness – as can be seen in the holistic nature of his ministry. He did not only touched the spiritual health of the people, but also restored the physical, mental, social, economic condition among many others. As a result, the people attained a foretaste of the inaugurated Kingdom of God, which will achieve its perfection in the new heaven and new earth.

In summary, Jesus' concern for the marginalized is not merely secondary in its nature. Rather, it represents the very heartbeat of God himself. So, for us who have experienced the loving grace of God in Christ; we are called to step out of our comfort zone. We are the ambassador of Christ,

called to serve the weak, the abandoned, the hurting and the forgotten concretely. We have to be “neighbors” to them, giving them sincere care and service that lightens their burdens. Just as Mat 25:35-45 reminds us that our good work to those “hungry, most despised, stranger, those without clothes, those who are sick and chained” is our good work for Christ. Serving these people means serving Christ. Paying attention to their cries is also paying attention to Christ. “... whatever you did not do for one of the least of these, you did not do for me.” (Mat 25:45). This is the meaning of Christmas that we often forget. Christ, the Emmanuel, has come for the lowest in our society. To experience Emmanuel means being able to care and serve others with an actual, realized action of love.

Reflection :

Those who have experienced the loving grace of God, are also the ones most sensitive towards the social injustice around them. They will not feel comfortable if they were to remain silent and not fight for justice to demonstrate their love for the marginalized. Let us, as a family, start a charity project for those in need. Let us work together to lighten their burdens. That we will be able to realize shalom in their midst.

Christmas Eve Family Altar Liturgy

Incarnation

Saturday, 24 Dec 2022



- Worship together with your family
- Prepare candles for candlelight
- Follow up with dinner and activities with your family.

Liturgy and guide can be downloaded via this link bit.ly/christmasevegii2022eng





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