



Small Group Study Guide for December 13, 2020

Our Savior Lutheran Church and School

Theme: Jesus brings joy! The third Sunday in Advent is half way through the season, and we cannot wait for the celebration of Christmas to come – there is an outburst of joy early, ahead of time. Joyful people are a life-giving fountain in our lives. Jesus is a source of endless joy.

Getting Started: (sharing with each other)

1. What has been a source of joy in your life these past few months?
2. Joyful people fill our cup and sustain us through the ups and downs. Who comes to mind when you think of a joyful person? How is that joyful person a blessing to you?

In the Word: Read Isaiah 61:1-3 (a closer look at the text)

3. These are the “Servant Songs of Isaiah” where a servant figure is speaking in the prophetic words. He is the same servant who suffers and dies and comes to life in Isaiah 53-54. In these verses, the servant is anointed to proclaim the good news. Note that the word “Anointed One” in Hebrew is “Messiah,” and in Greek it is “Christ.” The word “Gospel” means good news. What kind of good news does this servant proclaim? Jot down a list of good news items listed in these verses (they usually begin with the word “to”)
4. How does **Luke 4:16-21** shed important light on this passage?

Read Luke 1:39-47

5. Recall the story of Elizabeth, and who she is and how she is connected to Mary. (cf. 1:5-7, 36)
6. Elizabeth is filled with the Holy Spirit in verse 41. What does she immediately do then in verse 42. Do you think there is a connection?

Putting it all Together (what do we believe or do as disciples?)

7. Mary may have gone to stay with Elizabeth for a number of reasons. It may have been because Elizabeth needed help being an old, pregnant woman. It may have been because Mary was ostracized from her community who did not believe in a so-called virgin birth. In either case, family was helping family. Share some example of how God provides families to help each other, or how you have seen that in your own family.

8. Filled with the Holy Spirit, Elizabeth speaks. This is what people typically do when they are filled with the Holy Spirit. Words come out of their mouth. Jesus gives his disciples a great promise of the Holy Spirit in Luke 12:11-12. Why is that also a comfort to you, as a disciple of Jesus today?

9. This little baby in the womb, John, leaps for joy when he hears Mary's voice and Jesus draws near. The Greek word "*brephos*" is used for babies before they are born, and up to two years old. How does John's response while still in the womb affirm the "personhood" of pre-born babies? Can pre-born babies experience joy?

10. Verse 45 speaks volumes to our Christian life today. "Blessed is she who has believed that the Lord would fulfill His promises to her!" How does this elevate the importance of faith in the promises of God, and what does that mean for your life?

11. Mary sings the "Magnificat" – her song of praise in response to Elizabeth. "My soul glorified (or magnifies) the Lord, and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior..." Notice that Mary calls God her 'Savior.' How does that disprove any notion that Mary was sinless and perfect? Why is Mary still a great role model of faith and life for us today?

Prayer: Thank the Lord for the JOY we have in Him, and ask for the Holy Spirit to fill us so that we might speak words of praise and blessing. Ask for the Lord to increase our joy this year, even in the midst of so many changes, challenges, disappointments and heartaches.

Next Week: We light the fourth and final candle on our wreath and reflect on the LOVE of God to us. For God so loved the world that He GAVE. Love moves us to give, as God has given to us.

Note: Our final mid-week Advent Wednesday service is December 16, 7 p.m. Live Stream Only. It is based on the O Antiphons, which are the ancient prayers that turned into the hymn, O Come O Come Emmanuel.

Christmas Eve Schedule is as follows. Christmas Eve December 23, 5 p.m. – Family Friendly Service (no Communion), both in person & live stream. Christmas Eve December 24, 4 p.m. – contemporary with band, in person only; 7 p.m. – traditional with organ, in person and LIVESTREAM; 10 p.m. – traditional with organ, in person only. All three services on the 24th have Communion and Candles.