



WEEKLY STUDY

WEEK 2

We are in the season of Advent. In the four weeks leading up to Christmas, we take time to mark the growing anticipation of the coming of Jesus Christ. The word Advent means just that—"coming or arrival." This week we followed Mary to the home of Elizabeth. There we saw two women who were experiencing a miraculous manifestation of God's promises coming true. May you reflect on the promises that drive you to live for Jesus during this Advent season.

Peace of Christ,
Pastor Mark Youngman

If you are studying with your Providence Small Group or Discipleship Group, you can share from daily readings as well as the additional questions at the bottom of this guide. If you would like to get connected visit prov.church/smallgroups.

Find a time each day to read the passage of scripture and follow the daily prayer prompt.

DAILY STUDY

MONDAY: LUKE 1.39-45

In those days Mary arose and went with haste into the hill country, to a town in Judah,⁴⁰ and she entered the house of Zechariah and greeted Elizabeth.⁴¹ And when Elizabeth heard the greeting of Mary, the baby leaped in her womb. And Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit,⁴² and she exclaimed with a loud cry, "Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb!⁴³ And why is this granted to me that the mother of my Lord should come to me?⁴⁴ For behold, when the sound of your greeting came to my ears, the baby in my womb leaped for joy.⁴⁵ And blessed is she who believed that there would be^[a] a fulfillment of what was spoken to her from the Lord."

- A promise from God can be a beautiful thing, but at the same time, it can be a burden. Mary and Elizabeth both carried a promise made to them by God's angel. To each, the promise represented an unbelievable blessing but also a physical, emotional, and even a social commitment. They felt the impact of each promise in their bodies. **When has an opportunity ahead of you turned into a burden that seemed to weigh you down?**
- *God, your promises are great. Your promises can also be costly. Give me the strength to follow you and to live out the promises and your purpose in them. Amen.*

TUESDAY: GALATIANS 6.2

Carry each other's burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ.

- This popular verse from Galatians is addressing the weight of temptation and sin. It is only possible to overcome sin when the weight of sin is carried in part by someone else. For followers of Jesus, we recognize that the burden is lifted by Jesus himself. Even so, we share the journey with other disciples. Pastor Jacob shared how a promise from God can also be a burden which is why Mary's visit with Elizabeth was especially important. **Have you ever walked through a situation where you were sure that no one else could possibly understand? How might the outcome have been made better by sharing it anyway?**
- *God, increase my awareness of others who are carrying burdens and promises. Thank you for this reminder that I do not walk alone. Amen.*

WEDNESDAY: LUKE 10.30-37

In reply Jesus said: "A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, when he was attacked by robbers. They stripped him of his clothes, beat him and went away, leaving him half dead. ³¹ A priest happened to be going down the same road, and when he saw the man, he passed by on the other side. ³² So too, a Levite, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side. ³³ But a Samaritan, as he traveled, came where the man was; and when he saw him, he took pity on him. ³⁴ He went to him and bandaged his wounds, pouring on oil and wine. Then he put the man on his own donkey, brought him to an inn and took care of him. ³⁵ The next day he took out two denarii and gave them to the innkeeper. 'Look after him,' he said, 'and when I return, I will reimburse you for any extra expense you may have.'

³⁶ *"Which of these three do you think was a neighbor to the man who fell into the hands of robbers?"*

³⁷ *The expert in the law replied, "The one who had mercy on him."*

Jesus told him, "Go and do likewise."

- The story of the good Samaritan has become a standard for seeing the needs of others regardless of political or social lines. It also demonstrates the way in which we are able to carry burdens that are not our own. The Samaritan was compelled by a common humanity and possibly a hope that if the tables were turned, he would be cared for as well. **Who do you depend on to carry your burdens with you? How well do you see the needs of strangers around you?**
- *Thank you God for the gift of others that carry both the burdens and promises of a life of a disciple. Amen.*

THURSDAY: GENESIS 12.2-3

*"I will make you into a great nation,
and I will bless you;
I will make your name great,
and you will be a blessing.
³ I will bless those who bless you,
and whoever curses you I will curse;
and all peoples on earth
will be blessed through you."*

- God promised a great blessing for the people of Israel. But it wasn't just about them. Blessings from God are rarely meant to be temporary or terminal. When you receive a blessing there is most often another blessing just waiting to result from the first one. It operates like compounding interest. The more you invest and live into the promises of God, the deeper the impact can become. **When was the last time you were able to see how a blessing you received became a blessing you gave to someone else?**
- *God, I receive the promise of your great blessing. May I be blessed to be a blessing to those around me. Amen.*

FRIDAY: 2 PETER 3.12-13

...as you look forward to the day of God and speed its coming. That day will bring about the destruction of the heavens by fire, and the elements will melt in the heat.¹³ But in keeping with his promise we are looking forward to a new heaven and a new earth, where righteousness dwells.

- We rightly anticipate the fulfillment of all of God's promises. The Kingdom fully realized. Every tear wiped from every eye. Peace. Eternity in the presence of God. We look forward to Christmas because great joy happens when God arrives. How are we to live in the meantime? We look forward and we look around us. God's promises are shared in community and we can revel in his goodness like Mary and Elizabeth did. **What are you looking forward to right now? Are you good at waiting? Who do you share the waiting with?**
- *Jesus, I look forward to your arrival at Christmas. I look forward to your return and the new heaven and new earth you will bring. I look for signs of it now, and I celebrate your promises. Amen.*

SATURDAY: ROMANS 8.24-27

For in this hope we were saved. But hope that is seen is no hope at all. Who hopes for what they already have?²⁵ But if we hope for what we do not yet have, we wait for it patiently.

²⁶In the same way, the Spirit helps us in our weakness. We do not know what we ought to pray for, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us through wordless groans.²⁷ And he who searches our hearts knows the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for God's people in accordance with the will of God.

- The season of Advent is all about waiting and anticipating the arrival of Jesus at Christmas. We wait with hope because we know that God keeps His promises. We were saved through this hope and for this hope. **What signs point to the fact that you are waiting patiently this Advent season? Does your prayer life leave room for the Spirit to intercede?**
- *Holy Spirit, amplify the longing in my heart for fulfillment of the Father's promises. Amen.*

SMALL GROUP DISCUSSION

Pastor Jacob shared these lines in his sermon.

“we are waiting for eternal life, we believe it, we have it now!

we are waiting for salvation, we believe it, we have it now!

we are waiting for healing, we believe it, we have it now!”

- In what ways are you both waiting for and experiencing eternal life right now?
- In what ways are you both waiting for and experiencing salvation right now?
- In what ways are you both waiting for and experiencing healing right now?