

December 18, 2022 The Kingdom of God – Part 4.

There are basically three types of people in church today.

- 1) Unbelievers. These people are unconvinced of the words of the Bible, or not believing in a higher power or not believing in God at all. These tend to believe that this world is all there is - no eternity.
- 2) God fearers. These are believers in God but believe that God is distant, watching, and judging. These tend to believe they are judged by their works as in their good works outnumber their bad behavior. These often say of themselves that they are a pretty good person, or that they go to church and give to charity, or that they think they will make it in the end. All of these fear God but don't really know God.
- 3) Followers of Jesus. Those born again and do what Jesus commands. A follower of Jesus daily walks with the Holy Spirit.

Each of these types see the Christmas story in different ways:

- 1) For unbelievers, the Christmas story is an embellished story, a fable, or a story to make a point in order to teach a lesson.
- 2) The God-fearers know the story but celebrate the holiday only giving lip service to the real reason and get stressed and depressed.
- 3) Jesus followers look for and find the wonder and mystery of the manger. They realize this is the beginning of the life of Jesus and cumulates in His death, burial, and resurrection.

No matter where we are today, take a moment to ask Jesus to open our eyes to His realness and make today matter. After hearing these words, will you leave today believing? Be humbled by God's goodness and know that this story of Jesus' birth doesn't end after Christmas and all the festivities, but ends when we see Jesus face to face. There will be a day when all see Jesus face to face and declare Jesus as Lord. **Philippians 2:10-11** *that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue acknowledge that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.*

The apostle John knew the details of Jesus life. But he had more as He took care of Mary. **John 19:25-27** *But standing by the cross of Jesus were His mother, and His mother's sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene. When Jesus then saw His mother, and the disciple whom He loved standing nearby, He said to His mother, "Woman, behold, your son!" Then He said to the disciple, "Behold, your mother!" From that hour the disciple took her into his own household. On the cross, Jesus gave John to His mother, Mary, and gave His mother to John. Mary must have told John about Jesus' birth and His growing up years. At the end of the book of John, he wrote... **John 21:25** *But there are also many other things which Jesus did, which, if they were written in detail, I expect that even the world itself would not contain the books that would be written. So John had to know more so he tells about Jesus different than the other apostles.**

John 1:14, 16-17 *And the **Word** became flesh, and dwelt among us; and we saw His **glory, glory** as of the only Son from the Father, full of **grace and truth**. For of His fullness we have all received, and **grace upon grace**. For the Law was given through Moses; **grace and truth** were realized through Jesus Christ.*

The Word. John calls Jesus "the Word." The "Word" goes back to the beginning - Genesis. God spoke and creation happened - God was the "Word." John told us the "Word" at the beginning is the same "Word" that became flesh, became Jesus, dwelt among people. It is God coming to Earth and pitching His tent among us.

His Glory. *"We saw His glory."* Glory is who God is; glory is the person of God and all that He is. God became flesh; He became man. That was the Christmas story according to John. We learn of His glory from Moses. Moses interceded for the people as God wanted to destroy the rebellious people. God relents and then tells Moses that He will not go with the Israelites into the Promise Land. Moses intercedes again and doesn't want to go anywhere without God. God says ok. **Exodus 33:18** *Then Moses said, "Please, show me Your glory!"* Moses knew God; he knew His presence; he knew His character; he had witnessed His power and miracles but he wanted to see God's glory - to see God and God alone. **Exodus 34:6-7** *Then the Lord passed by in front of him and proclaimed, "The Lord, the Lord God, compassionate and merciful, slow to anger, and abounding in faithfulness and truth; who keeps faithfulness for thousands, who forgives wrongdoing, violation of His Law, and sin..."* This God was God born in the manger - the God we behold. Jesus came so we could know Him. Jesus' coming was so important to the apostle John because it was the same as what Moses wanted - to see Him - to know Him. What Moses wanted was freely given to all of us when Jesus was born. God was coming to all of us.

Full of Grace and Truth. Jesus came so we could know Him - to know grace and truth. Christmas is the beginning of that journey to know what grace is. Grace frees us from always trying and always failing to please God. We can stop the insanity of paying a debt that we cannot pay. We cannot bring new life to ourselves, no amount of goodness will work. We need Jesus. Grace means that there is nothing I can do to make God love me more and there is nothing I can do to make God love me less. Grace is undeserved favor from God.

How do we know we have received that grace? Receive it - it's free from God. A test to know... Is your life lived out in bitterness or in getting even? Do you treat others with grace? Are you in broken relationships? These might believe in God but be a God-fearer - One who believes the stories but hasn't accepted the grace of God.

Full of Grace and Truth. John 3:3 *Jesus answered and said to him, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God."* The Kingdom of God is Heaven; it is righteousness, peace and joy here on the Earth. It is here and it is there! Jesus' truth was that we could have the Kingdom of God here and also be in the Kingdom of God in Heaven. Our own trying is not good enough. There is no righteousness, peace, or joy without grace and truth. Grace is the unmerited favor of God. Truth is that through Jesus we are born again.

Unless a person admits they need grace and that their own trying to be good enough for God is futile, they can not have right standing with God, peace with God and others, real joy in living here on Earth or entrance into Heaven. That is the truth that Jesus came to deliver.

Are you born again? Have you submitted to Jesus' call to *come unto Me all that are weary and heavy laden?*

Matthew 11:28

- Submit your life totally to following Jesus.
- Ask for God's grace, His unearned forgiveness, and removal of guilt. No matter where we are or how we are hiding, He will give new life, a divine do-over, and removal of guilt.
- Embrace the truth - the truth of who you are (a sinner) and that He will give each one of us new life (born again).