

4Ws

GOD'S GRACE DISPLAYED

CHRISTMAS: GOD'S GRACE DISPLAYED

DECEMBER 19, 2021

WORSHIP

Joy to the World,
Emmanuel God With Us,
The Name of Emmanuel,
O Come All Ye Faithful

WELCOME

Have you received a gift or invitation that you think was unexpected or somehow undeserved? Something that is too good to be true. How did you respond to the giver?

WORD

LUKE 2:8-11
(READ UP TO VERSE 20)
& MATTHEW 22:1-14

⁸ In the same region there were some shepherds staying out in the fields and keeping watch over their flock by night. ⁹ And an angel of the Lord suddenly stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them; and they were terribly frightened. ¹⁰ But the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid; for behold, I bring you good news of great joy which will be for all the people; ¹¹ for today in the city of David there has been born for you a Savior, who is Christ the Lord."

How do we usually celebrate Christmas? We get busy with a lot of preparations, cooking, reunions, – in reality, we celebrate Christmas depending on our understanding of its significance. Many of us focus on celebrating Christmas without focusing on the CELEBRANT, Jesus Christ. Christmas gives us the most amazing opportunity to tell others about its true meaning. **Luke 2:10-11** describes Christmas this way – "But the angel said to them, "**Do not be afraid**; for behold, I bring you **good news of great joy** which will be **for all the people**; for today in the city of David there has been born for you **a Savior, who is Christ the Lord.**" The significance of Christmas is that it is **GOD'S GRACE DISPLAYED** – it is about the good news!

God's grace deals with our root problem – SIN. Something is wrong in our hearts and lives and we really need a **SAVIOR**. Jesus is called **CHRIST**, the Anointed King, the Chosen Messiah. Jesus is also called **LORD (Heb. YHWH, Gk. KYRIOS)** – a fitting title to the reason for this global celebration.

To understand the significance of the first coming of Jesus, we need to talk about His Second Coming – in fact, for every prophecy about the first coming, 8 prophecies talk about Christ's return– and it will make even greater sense when we understand how both display the GRACE of GOD. When you look at how the Second Coming is described, you will see certain similarities with the first. **Revelation 19:6-7, 9**, shows that this is also a moment of rejoicing! It gives us the imagery of Christ coming as a bridegroom, and the church as His bride, culminating in an amazing reunion at the end of times. Earthly history will end in the Wedding Supper of the Lamb – the Wedding Feast. Both **INITIATED** by God, both **INCLUSIVE**, and both centered **IN CHRIST**.

INITIATED BY GOD

Luke 2:8-10 shows that Christmas is initiated by GOD. He was never forced to give up His Son – it was willingly and voluntarily thought out by God. The command "**do not be afraid**" was given by God countless times in the Bible. Some scholars say that there are 365 verses with this command, enough for every day of the year. Today, people are fearful – afraid of the future, work, career, financial security, health, and even losing loved ones. The secret to overcome these worries is to know the heart of GOD – it is not to deny the fear, but replace that fear with the good news. **Galatians 4:4-5** is very clear – God has been planning Christmas even before the creation of the world! Christmas is all about the Son of God becoming a Son of Man, so that we sons of men can become children of God. Christmas displays God's love for us, initiated by Him..

INCLUSIVE

The first announcement of the birth of Jesus was given to **shepherds**, among the lowest-ranked people during that time. They were outcasts, due to the constant violation of the Sab-

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bath day; they needed to work and care for the needs of the flock! But praise God, the news was first given to them. God wants us to know His grace is inclusive – for rich and poor. It was the humble people, not the self-sufficient ones, that the first message was revealed to. God assures us that our ability to experience His grace, love, and care, is not because we are qualified. It is unmerited, it is undeserved.

IN CHRIST

God's grace is fully understood in Christ. Jesus goes down the pit for us – He came to *SAVE* us. And this grace is not a one-time event or confined to Christmas. You and I need grace, it sustains us all the time. It empowers us to live lives that are pleasing to God.

THE PARABLE OF THE WEDDING FEAST

In **Matthew 22** Jesus gives another parable to explain the kingdom of heaven – the wedding feast. A king **INITIATED** the invitation for the wedding feast, but the invitees were unwilling to come. In their culture, two invitations are given – one to know how many are going, and the other is calling them to the event itself. Despite the offer and generosity of the king, some people even responded in hostility and busyness, prioritizing other things instead of the king's invitation. This was given to show how people would treat Jesus, the Savior and promised Messiah. It is unthinkable to reject God's offer, but there are some who will reject it. We also see the invitation becomes **INCLUSIVE** – the king extends the invitation for all – “**as many people as you find**” (**Matthew. 22:9**). There are people even today who hear God's invitation but are either indifferent or 'hostile. The key to be in the wedding feast is to be **IN CHRIST**. In the parable, one guest was seen not wearing the right wedding clothes provided by the king. The clothes are symbolic of our righteousness in Christ – we put off our old self, and put on the righteousness found in Christ (**Colossians 3:8-10,11-13, Titus 2:11-12**, see also **Zechariah 3:1-5**). Grace is not only a gift, but also a responsibility. As one scholar said, “**Those who accept God's grace of salvation must not and cannot remain the same.**” In Christ, we have righteousness and sanctification (**1 Corinthians 1:30**)!

Similarly, **Revelation 19:7-8** says that by grace, we are not only made righteous, but also empowered to live in righteousness. That's why **v.9** declares blessing to those who are “**invited to the marriage supper of the Lamb**”. The King of kings is inviting us to His everlasting joy. We miss out on a great opportunity if we don't respond to this gracious invitation. We must respond like the shepherds in the Christmas story – an **INDIVIDUAL RESPONSE** is required. The shepherds in **Luke 2:15-20** with great joy and excitement, and shared the good news to others! Let us respond in faith, submission, worship, and share to others the real meaning of the season as we celebrate Christmas!

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

(Leaders: Please choose questions that are appropriate to the level of spiritual maturity of your members)

1. Self-Check.

How have you responded to the invitation of God? How have you responded to God's grace?

2. Setting It Right.

How do you plan to celebrate Christmas this time? How can you make it more meaningful?

3. Living It Out.

Who in your life needs to receive God's invitation? What steps will you take to share the good news?

WORKS

PRAY CARE SHARE IN ACTION

Pray that people's minds be renewed and their hearts softened to say YES to Jesus' invitation this Christmas. Share your blessings (e.g., a care package) to someone who is in need this week. Share the good news of salvation in the Lord Jesus Christ. Creatively let others know the true meaning of Christmas!

WEEKLY PRAYER POINTS

I. Thanksgiving

Worship God for who He is, what He has done, and what He will do in our lives

II. Country and the World

Upright and moral governance of Public Servants
A God-centered Philippines
Repentance and Salvation

III. Church

That CCF Members would honor and love God and make disciples
Elders, Pastors, Leaders, and Families
Ministries and Churches worldwide

IV. CCF Facilities

Worship and Training Center
Prayer Mountain

V. Personal Concerns

Deeper intimate relationship with God
Righteous living
Salvation of family and friends

MEMORY VERSE

Luke 2:10-11

¹⁰ ...“Do not be afraid; for behold, I bring you good news of great joy which will be for all the people; ¹¹ for today in the city of David there has been born for you a Savior, who is Christ the Lord.”