



GRACE
BIBLE FELLOWSHIP CHURCH

THE
GREATEST

Story

EVER LIVED

ADVENT FAMILY DEVOTIONAL



WHO CAN
STAND WHEN
HE APPEARS?

MALACHI 3:2

THE REFINER COMES

WEEK 4/ DAY 1

SCRIPTURE READING

- Malachi 3:1-4 (*Jesus Storybook Bible*—“Get Ready”)

The Old Testament closes with a great note of anticipation—The Lord of Heaven's hosts (armies) is soon coming to His holy temple. The One Who made Heaven and Earth and retains their ownership is coming to make the wrong things right, to restore goodness and justice, to purge the stains of evil that mar the beauty of His creation.

But...it also ends with a question—“But who can endure the day of his coming, and who can stand when He appears?” The fact is, some of the wrong things and evil stains that need to be dealt with are not just “out there”. They are in us. In many ways, they are us. And there is the dilemma of Biblical hope. We want a God who is going to come deal with sin, evil, violence, and injustice. A hope that doesn't deal with that isn't really hope. It's just more of the same. And yet, if the story of God's people reveals anything, it's that we are not able, left to ourselves, to avoid the very things that need to be dealt with. We can't keep our hearts clean. We can't keep our hands off the seductive idols of our culture. And when our idols are threatened, we're all too quick to join in with the anger and the hatred and the violent tactics that plague God's creation. Hardly a day goes by without us running to the sin that rightly deserves God's judgment.

So we need both a judge to come make things right, *and* an advocate who will stand in our corner, take up our desperate condition, and loving plead on our behalf. Enter, the New Testament...


DISCUSS

In what ways do you participate in the brokenness of creation? What sin or weakness in your life needs to be brought before the throne of mercy so that you may find grace to heal and grow?

TAKE IT FURTHER

- Watch the Bible Project Advent video on hope

<https://bibleproject.com/explore/video/yakhal-hope>



YOU WILL
HAVE JOY AND
GLADNESS

LUKE 1:14

PREPARING THE WAY

WEEK 4/DAY 2

SCRIPTURE READING

- Luke 15-25

"How long, o Lord?" It's the cry of David in his Psalms (i.e. 6 & 13). It's the longing of the prophet Habakkuk (1:2). It's the plea of the saints gathered around the heavenly throne (Rev. 6:10). And my guess is, it often flowed from the lips of Zechariah and Elizabeth. Long he had served God faithfully as priest over His people. Long had they kept "blamelessly" the commandments and statutes of the Lord (1:6). And yet, the deep desire of their hearts, to have a child, year after year, was left unfulfilled. How long would they have to wait, trusting God's goodness in the midst of sadness?

"How long, o Lord?" I wonder if the multitude of people gathered in prayer outside the temple were wondering the same thing. I wonder if after years of heavy oppression and taxation, years of not being free to worship exactly as they would desire, years of not being their own people but rather subject to the Roman empire...they cried as they offered their incense, how long until you come and deliver?

It's into this scene that the birth of John the Baptism is promised—the one who would prepare the way for the coming of the Lord, the one who would prepare the hearts of the people to receive their King. The cries and longings of a waiting people are about to be answered. The "hopes and fears of all the years" are at long last about to be met.

DISCUSS

- Who do you identify with in this story—Zechariah who wasn't quite prepared for the news of Gabriel and found it hard to accept, or Elizabeth who receives the news with great joy?

TAKE IT FURTHER

- Watch the Bible Project Advent video on joy and discuss the relation between believing God's promises and experiencing joy

<https://bibleproject.com/explore/video/chara-joy>



HE WHO IS
MIGHTY HAS
DONE GREAT
THINGS FOR ME

LUKE 1:49

A DIFFERENT KING

WEEK 4 /DAY 3

SCRIPTURE READING

- Luke 1:26-33 & 46-56

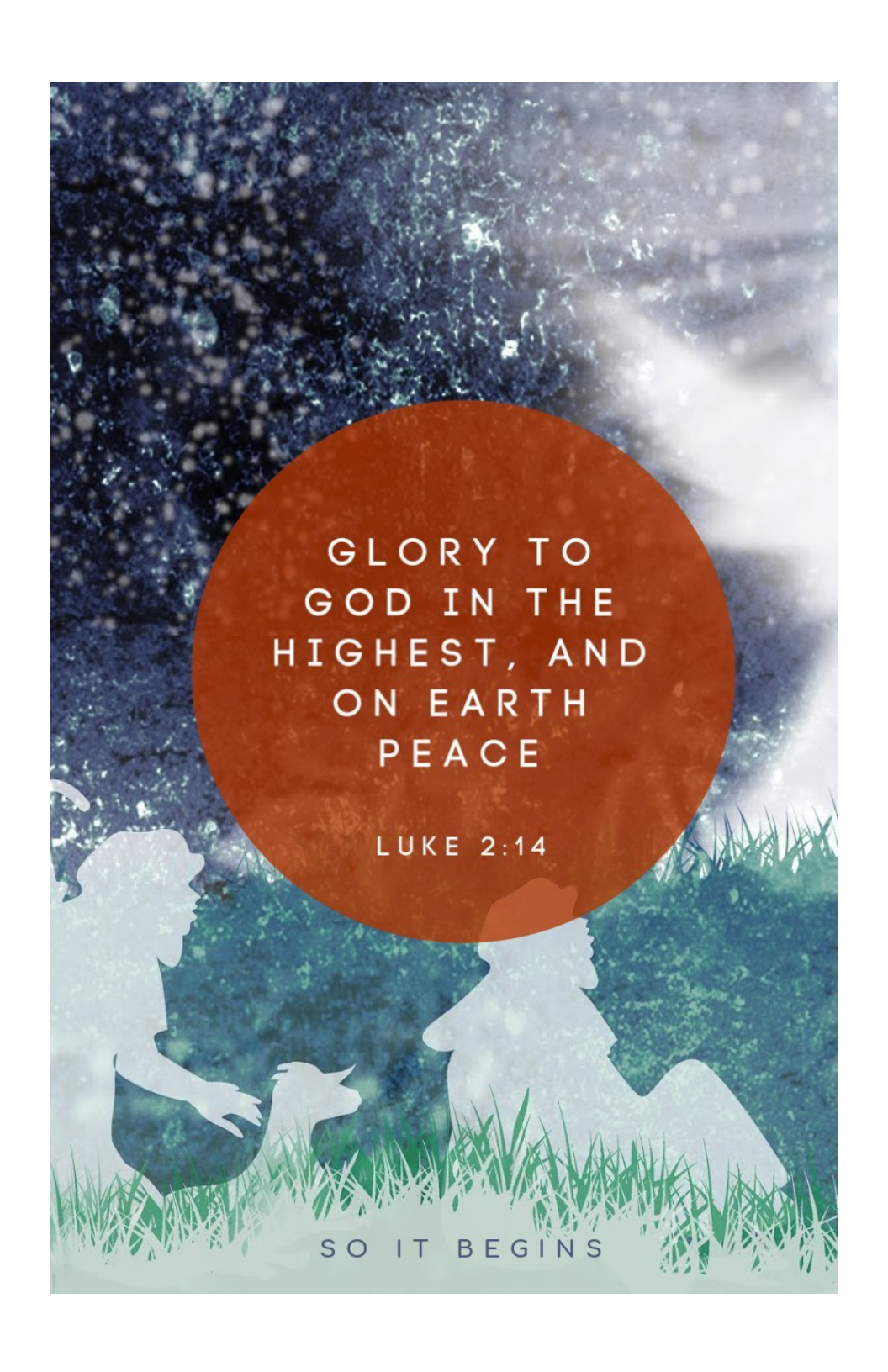
He could have come anywhere. He could have chosen a relaxing villa along the Mediterranean to be his home. He could have been born in the palaces of Rome or to the families of important religious leaders...or perhaps just a quiet middle class house in the suburbs of Jerusalem. But instead, this king chooses to be born to a poor, peasant family in a small town in the backwoods of Israel that was often associated with tragedy and heartbreak.

What kind of strange king is this? Most kings seem in love with their treasures. This king seems more lovingly concerned for those in distress, those with deep need. Most kings seem desperate to hold onto power, maintain their kingdoms, increase the life they've attained for themselves. This king seems more interested in giving those things away—trading the glory of Heaven for the sorrows of Bethlehem, living and giving His life for those drowning in sin and death.

This is partly why Mary sings a song of praise, which is also a song of great reversal—the mighty have been brought down from their thrones while the humble are being exalted, the hungry are filled while the rich are sent away empty, the proud are scattered. Why? Because the great King of all creation has made His home among the weak, the desperate and lowly.

One thing to consider: Those who are proud and mighty feel no need for a rescuer. Those who are rich don't need mercy. Those who are full, like the inns of Bethlehem, have no room for a savior-king who comes to repair broken places and broken lives. AND...this strange king models for us a new way to think about life and love. True glory, it seems, is not about seizing the most out of life, often at the neglect or expense of others, but choosing to view life as a gift to be shared in love.

TAKE it FURTHER: Watch the Bible Project Advent video about Love. <https://bibleproject.com/explore/video/agape-love>



GLORY TO
GOD IN THE
HIGHEST, AND
ON EARTH
PEACE

LUKE 2:14

SO IT BEGINS

WEEK 4 /DAY 4

SCRIPTURE READING

- Luke 2:8-15

This is an interesting passage to read towards the close of 2020. It feels a little strange to hear the angels announcing peace on earth among those with whom God is pleased while we're having to stay distant from loved ones on account of a pandemic raging across God's creation. Or how do we rejoice over peace after a year that saw violence, abuse of power, and restless protests in our streets? Can we sing of peace after a year of bitter political division and hatred? If anything, we feel more like singing the words of the Christmas carol,

But in despair, I bowed my head.

There is no peace on earth I said.

For hate is strong, and mocks the song

Of peace on Earth, goodwill to men

But the message of Christmas is that the operation of restoring peace is underway. Even this baby would not live in peace. Soon He'll be on the run from a rage and fear-filled king. He'll face rejection and death-threats throughout His life. And one day, all the world's hate and violence will crush Him. But there's something officially underway. Resurrection is brewing.

This child has entered into and will soon absorb all the world's sinful chaos and unrest. And in so doing, the great restoration will be officially underway. Soon enough, *the wrong shall fail, the right prevail with peace on earth, goodwill to men.*

Soon enough the whole world (will) sing back the song, that now the angels sing!

DISCUSS

- As you prepare to celebrate Christmas, what is most meaningful to you about the birth of Jesus?

TAKE IT FURTHER- Watch the Bible Project Advent video on peace—<https://bibleproject.com/explore/video/shalom-peace>

A night landscape featuring a dark, silhouetted mountain range in the foreground and a vast, star-filled sky above. The Milky Way galaxy is visible, stretching across the upper half of the frame. A large, semi-transparent orange circle is positioned on the right side of the image, partially overlapping the sky and the mountain range. The text is overlaid on this image.

WEEK
SCRIPTURE

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4/DAY 5

- JOHN 1:1-18

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JOHN 1:14

TOR RETURNS

ADVENT FAMILY DEVOTIONAL

Throughout the weeks of Advent, we'll be providing these brief devotionals on the overarching storyline of the Bible leading up to the birth of Jesus. The goal is to help families see and appreciate the beautiful rescue operation God commits to for the sake of His beloved children. Its also aimed at helping us all remember our part in that same story as not only recipients of that redemption but also servants in the continuing mission. Each day there be a passage to read together followed by the explanation, devotional thought, and question or two for discussion. Most passages also have a corresponding section in the Jesus Storybook Bible if you would prefer to read the story from there. And the stories we use pair well with