

DECEMBER 5, 2021

SMALL GROUP REFLECTIONS

- Open with Prayer
- Read Message Introduction
- Read the Gospel

[optional – all 3 readings]

- Discuss Reflection & Questions
- Close with Prayer and Personal / Group Intentions



Expect Miracles Series Summary: A miracle is when God intervenes and breaks through into history in a dramatic and unusual way, in a way that defies the usual rules of nature. A miracle appeals to our senses to remind us that God is indeed with us. The first Christmas was a miracle. God became flesh through Mary's ascent to become the mother of God. Through the Christmas story, the people who expect miracles and are on the lookout for God experience miracles and the joy of the incarnation. The people who are not looking for God's activity miss out on it.

Opening Questions

1. What are you doing this week to get ready and prepare for Christmas?
2. Why is preparation important for any endeavor we take? What happens when we don't prepare?

SCRIPTURE: BAR 5:1-9; PHIL 1: 4-6, 8-11; LK 3: 1-6. | BREAK OPEN THE GOSPEL

We hear from Luke that this is an appointed time, the actual dates, *[In the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Caesar]* because he is telling us that all he is to share in his Gospel is very real. There are more miracle stories in Luke's Gospel than any other. And we begin to see a pattern.

Last week we talked about how times of trial often precede miracles. Here's another key point: With every miracle, notice also that God does not act alone – first, He looks to us.

- Jesus asks first for water, then there is wine aplenty at Cana – and good wine!
- Jesus feeds the 5,000, but first he asks everyone to collect all the loaves and fishes.
- Jesus first asks obedience of Bartimaeus, and then, the blind beggar becomes the model disciple.

John the Baptist tells us to repent, prepare the way of the Lord and to make straight his paths. In every miracle God provides, we are asked to do the possible and God does the impossible.

1. John preaches repentance, which simply means a sorrow for our sin that leads to change. Why is sorrow sometimes needed to help us make changes in our life?
2. When in your life has sorrow or regret helped you to make changes such as health, finance, relationship, etc.? What about your relationship with God? Or with the Church?

3. Read again verses 4-6.

"Prepare the way of the Lord, make straight his paths."

What does it mean to you to "prepare the way of the Lord?" This is what you are asked to do!

"Every valley shall be filled and every mountain and hill shall be made low. The winding roads shall be made straight, and the rough ways made smooth, and all flesh shall see the salvation of God."

What "miracles" do you see in this passage? Do you see where God comes in?

Application

This week you will be asked to fill out an Expect Miracle card: What "miracle" would you like to work on with God this Advent? What mountain is too high, what valley too wide? This is a 2-part question: What miracle? How will you prepare for it?

Reflect on the book "Messages of Gratitude for Advent and Christmas 2021", for the Second Week of Advent – the week for PEACE. For example, this week, passages from St. Luke and St. Paul give us tips for seeking peace....we can turn our attention to our problems, or we can petition to God....

Prayer

Go around the circle and close your group out with prayer. Have everyone pray for the miracle they are expecting this Christmas.

A Prayer for Advent

Heavenly Father,
In this Advent of expectation
draw us together in unity,
that our praise and worship
might echo in these walls
and also through our lives.

In this Advent of expectation
draw us together in mission,
that the hope within
might be the song we sing,
and the melody of our lives.

In this Advent of expectation
draw us together in service,
that the path we follow
might lead us from a stable
to a glimpse of eternity.

In this Advent of expectation
draw us closer to you,
that we may hear your voice,
and see with the eyes of faith
the miracle you desire for us.

Amen