

DECEMBER 12, 2021  
THIRD SUNDAY OF ADVENT  
SMALL GROUP REFLECTIONS



- Open with Prayer
- Read Message Introduction
- Readings + Gospel
- 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.

**Week One:** Miracles often come out of times of trial. Look for signs of God at work and God with us.

**Week Two:** John the Baptist tells us to prepare the way of the Lord and to make straight his paths. In every miracle God provides, human beings are asked to prepare the way for the miracle. We do the possible and God does the impossible.

**Week Three:** People were asking John - What shall we do? And so he tells them...some active ways a disciple of Christ may live. But more fundamentally, there is prayer. The most important thing we can do in preparing for a miracle is pray for it. It is an incredibly important ingredient. It is the most obvious one of all, but we overlook it or we get it wrong. *If you want a miracle, you need to ask. And you've got to ask in the right way...* We hear that in the passages from Philippians.

Gaudete Sunday – The Third Sunday we notice we are closer to the light, from purple to rose pink, and as the Lord is ever closer, we "Rejoice".

### Opening Questions

1. Who taught you how to pray? What were you taught about prayer growing up?
2. How is your prayer life? What criteria do you use to evaluate your prayer?
3. Do you know when your prayers are answered? Have you ever felt "joy" through prayer?

SCRIPTURE: ZEP 3:14-18A; PHIL 4:4-7; LK 3:10-18

*Read aloud Philippians 4:4-7.*

Brothers and sisters: Rejoice in the Lord always. I shall say it again: rejoice! Your kindness should be known to all. The Lord is near. Have no anxiety at all, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, make your requests known to God. Then the peace of God that surpasses all understanding will guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus.

1. Paul tells us to rejoice in the Lord always. Is that possible? Why or why not.
2. Read aloud verse 6. How much anxiety does Paul tell us we should have? Would you like to live your life in that way?
3. What is causing you anxiety or worry at the moment?
4. Re-read verse 6. What specifics does Paul give us about the cure for anxiety, worry?
5. Read aloud verse 7. What does this verse tell us about the results of prayer made with thanksgiving and that specifically makes our requests known to God?

### Application

How can you pray for your miracle this week – particularly if you had time to write an “Expect Miracles” card? What would a prayer that reflects the above teaching from Paul look like in your life? Pray for healing and forgiveness – Advent Penance Services are at 10am and 7pm Tuesday, December 14.

*Reflect on the book “Messages of Gratitude for Advent and Christmas 2021”, for the Third Week of Advent – the week for Joy – and the connection between gratitude and miracles. The Third Week of Advent daily devotions focus in greater detail on St. Paul’s teaching. **DID YOU KNOW?** The word *rejoice* occurs more often in the Letter to the Philippians than in any other book of the Bible. “Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice!” - Philippians 4.4*

**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