

COMMUNITY GROUP WEEKLY DISCUSSION GUIDE
WEEK OF DECEMBER 7, 2009

THIS WEEK'S FOCUS

Peace on Earth

"Man is not at peace with his fellow man because he is not at peace with himself; he is not at peace with himself because he is not at peace with God."

-Thomas Merton

"For to us a child is born, to us a son is given;
and the government shall be upon his shoulder, and his name shall be called
Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.
Of the increase of his government and of peace there will be no end,
On the throne of David and over his kingdom, to establish it and to uphold it
with justice and righteousness from this time forth and forevermore.
The zeal of the LORD of hosts will do this"

-Isaiah 9:6-7

THIS WEEK'S TEXT

Matthew 2:7-18

RELATED TEXTS TO EXPLORE

Psalms 45:8, 72:10-11; Isaiah 60:3-6; Numbers 24:17-19; Obadiah 18; Acts 4:25-28, 12:21-24; 1 Samuel 9:7; Revelation 18:13; Exodus 30:23; Jeremiah 31:15; Genesis 42:13; John 19:39; Hosea 11:1

STUDY GUIDE

- **What observations can be made about:**
 - The author of this Gospel
 - The historical figure Herod and his motives and methods in this account
 - The political climate in Herod's kingdom at this time
 - The prevailing cultural dynamic at this time
 - The wise men, their motives, the way in which God directed them, and their response to Jesus
 - The travels of Joseph and his family. The faith of Joseph and his family.
 - The severity of Herod's reaction to having been tricked. What this says about the perceived importance of this baby, Jesus.
 - The way in which the Prophets are quoted in this account. Are they quoted in a way that is salient, consistent and reliable? To what degree does this advance or strengthen the account?

- **What does each of these things mean? What did they mean for the original readers, what do they mean for us now?**

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

Use any or as many of these questions as will be helpful for your discussion.

- What has God spoken to you about this week regarding the sermon or passage?
- What does this passage reveal to us about Jesus?
- How does this passage enhance our understanding of the Gospel?
- What does this text mean for us as a community? Individually? How does it free us to be the people God intends for us to be?
- How do we need to live out the meaning of this text in our city?
- In the sermon, Pastor JR said that Advent is a line in history but also a line in the sand – one that demands a decision and response. How do you feel compelled to respond? Are our responses one-time, perpetual, or both? How so?
- What does it mean for us that Jesus entered the world as a refugee with a death threat?
- How should we respond to the darker side of Christmas? How do we celebrate appropriately the beauty of the Christmas story even in the midst of great suffering and tragedy?
- In what ways do you find yourself “fighting against that which will never lose”?
- In what ways are you worshipping and experiencing God during this Advent season?

“What can you do to promote world peace? Go home and love your family.”

–Mother Theresa

By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.”

–John 13:35

MEMORY VERSES

Last Week: Titus 2:11-12

This Week: Matthew 2:9-11

PRAYER FOCUS

For the Vision and Direction of the church (December):

Apostles Church wants to be a people who intentionally connect others to Jesus. We will authentically, compassionately and intelligently dialogue with the culture about the Gospel of Jesus.

In Response to the Text:

- Praising God for delivering Jesus from Herod, which literally changed the world
- Praising God for his wisdom, goodness and sovereignty that is beyond our understanding
- Confessing our frequent failure to regard Christ as King
- Confessing the ways we have disregarded his augustness this week
- Thanking God for the miracle of the incarnation and the obedience of Joseph and Mary
- Thanking God for pursuing us with an unrelenting pursuit and with an unrelenting love
- Asking God to lift our affections for him and give us hearts that treasure Christ above all things
- Asking God to enable us to see and worship Him in spectacular ways this Advent season

FURTHER RESOURCES FOR STUDY AND PREPARATION

- *Matthew Henry's Commentary:* <http://tinyurl.com/yhm899x>
- *IVP Commentary:* <http://tinyurl.com/y9bfnbs>
- *Geneva Study Notes:* <http://tinyurl.com/yes9wa3>
- *The Bible Speaks Today:* <http://tinyurl.com/ykaxkc3>

NEXT WEEK'S TEXT

TBD