

In recent weeks of advent, we have retold the birth narratives of the Christ. How God was active in bringing salvation to the world by sending his only son into the world as one of us – fully God and fully human. However, we don't know much about Jesus's early life.

Luke 2:22-40

**2:22 When the time came for their purification** according to the law of Moses, they brought him up to Jerusalem to present him to the Lord... 2:25 Now there was a man in Jerusalem whose name was Simeon; this man was righteous and devout, looking forward to the consolation of Israel, and the Holy Spirit rested on him. 2:26 It had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not see death before he had seen the Lord's Messiah. 2:27 Guided by the Spirit, Simeon came into the temple; and when the parents brought in the child Jesus, to do for him what was customary under the law, 2:28 **Simeon took him in his arms and praised God, saying, "Master, now you are dismissing your servant in peace, according to your word; for my eyes have seen your salvation, which you have prepared in the presence of all peoples, a light for revelation to the Gentiles and for glory to your people Israel."**

2:33 And the child's father and mother were amazed at what was being said about him.

...2:36 There was also a prophet, Anna the daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Asher. ... At that moment she came, and began to praise God and to speak about the child to all who were looking for the redemption of Jerusalem. When they had finished everything required by the law of the Lord, they returned to Galilee, to their own town of Nazareth. **2:40 The child grew and became strong, filled with wisdom; and the favor of God was upon him.**

Luke 2:41-46 (NIV) **The Boy Jesus at the Temple**

41 Every year Jesus' parents went to Jerusalem for the Festival of the Passover. 42 When he was twelve years old, they went up to the festival, according to the custom. 43 After the festival was over, while his parents were returning home, the boy Jesus stayed behind in Jerusalem, but they were unaware of it. 44 Thinking he was in their company, they traveled on for a day. Then they began looking for him among their relatives and friends. 45 When they did not find him, they went back to Jerusalem to look for him. 46 After three days they found him in the temple courts, sitting among the teachers, listening to them and asking them questions.

John 2 (NIV) **Jesus Changes Water Into Wine**

2 On the third day a wedding took place at Cana in Galilee. Jesus' mother was there, 2 and Jesus and his disciples had also been invited to the wedding. 3 When the wine was gone, Jesus' mother said to him, "They have no more wine."

4 "Why do you involve me?" Jesus replied. "My hour has not yet come."

5 His mother said to the servants, "Do whatever he tells you."

6 Nearby stood six stone water jars, the kind used by the Jews for ceremonial washing, each holding from twenty to thirty gallons.

7 Jesus said to the servants, "Fill the jars with water"; so they filled them to the brim.

8 Then he told them, "Now draw some out and take it to the master of the banquet."

They did so, 9 and the master of the banquet tasted the water that had been turned into wine. He did not realize where it had come from, though the servants who had drawn the water knew. Then he called the bridegroom aside 10 and said, "Everyone brings out the choice wine first and then the cheaper wine after the guests have had too much to drink; but you have saved the best till now."

11 What Jesus did here in Cana of Galilee was the first of the signs through which he revealed his glory; and his disciples believed in him. After this he went down to Capernaum with his mother and brothers and his disciples. There they stayed for a few days.

Jesus had humble beginnings as a carpenter's son. But as John puts it, John 3:19 This is the verdict: Light has come into the world! God's grace is given to us as light. There are 4 ways Grace is Light.

## **1 Grace is Light - Where there isn't light there is darkness.**

That's a fact – darkness is just where there is no light.

Isaiah 9:2 New International Version (NIV)

<sup>2</sup>The people walking in darkness have seen a great light;  
on those living in the land of deep darkness a light has dawned.

Isaiah realizes that darkness covers the earth and the darkness is thickest over people. There was a lack of light. Although it sounds like it, Isaiah isn't talking about how life was before creation – He's talking about life after the fall. All of those who claim to know the best way to live without God or the best way to be happy without God, are in darkness. These people are proud and arrogant, thinking they are a light to the world. The truth is, they are just pulling the wool over their own eyes. Instead of bringing light to the world they are increasing the darkness, pushing away the light.

Now there are others in the world who are agents of light. They are piercing the darkness with the light of God. It would be really neat if Grace worked like light – if Christians could just use a flashlight to show God's truth to people. But that's not how it works. Agents of God's light, have to reveal God's grace to people – showing them God's love and God's forgiveness through Jesus. Grace has to be shown with words and actions, that's how God's light reaches through the darkness.

Grace is very much like light. If you don't have God's grace in your life, you're wandering around life in darkness.

## **2 Grace is Light - You can't hide from light for long; and when it finds you, it will brighten your day.**

Have you ever tried to hide from the light? I did as a child...you can't hide from light for very long.

Also, one summer I did a pretty good job of it...I worked nights and slept in a room with no windows to the outside. – I got sick...eventually I started getting up and moving out of the bedroom onto the couch to lay in the sunlight.

Both Isaiah and Paul testify both of these truths about grace. – You can't hide from God's grace for very long, and when it finds you it will brighten your day. Isaiah begins the 60<sup>th</sup> chapter by stating that "light has come, and the glory of the LORD rises upon you"...and later says that "You will look and be radiant, your heart will throb and swell with joy."

Paul admits that God's plan to bring grace to all people was hidden until Christ came to us. But now, God's plan is to be revealed to everyone – to the ends of the earth.

Grace is a lot like light. You can't hide from it for long – and when it finds you it will brighten your day. God is always working to bring his love into your life. God is even working on the most grumpy, angry, anti-everything person.

### **3 Grace is Light - Light is energy.**

Just like light is energy from the sun. God's grace is energy from God's son.

Paul states it is by God's grace we have been saved through faith. Only on account of Jesus death and resurrection do we have an avenue to the God.

Grace is energy – it is the power of God to transform your life.

### **4 Grace is Light - Staying in the light takes responsibility.**

Never stop asking what it takes to stay in the light.

Grace has to be shown with words and actions, that's how God's light reaches through the darkness.

This brings us back to the origin stories we have about Jesus:

Jesus grew like many other boys his age – he learned how to walk, he learned how to talk, he followed his dad around and learned everything his father could teach him. He listened to his mom and learned all she had to teach him as well. Jesus, although he was God's son, grew and developed getting stronger and wiser throughout his youth. He was the model apprentice. There came a time, however, when Jesus had to make a choice – a decision about his spiritual growth. And so he went to the temple. And from that time on, the bible tells us, “Jesus grew in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and men.”

Jesus knew he had to be about his Heavenly Father's work. He claimed that as his mission very early in life.

His personal mission was obedience to his father above.

His mission was to do all he was called to do...to preach the word of God, to teach the Word of God, and to be the Word of God.

The mission of Jesus Christ was to bring salvation to others.

His mission was fueled by a vision, a vision of a new day – a day in which God ruled the hearts of men and women; a day in which God would live among us.

Today is New Year's Eve. So let us not forget to make New Year Resolutions for our faith. Let us together promise to grow in grace like God's son.

You and I have reached a time when we have to make a choice – a decision about our own spiritual growth. We are here in church, so let us grow like God’s son.

We know we have to be about our God’s work.

In general each of us has a mission to be obedient to our Creator above.

Our mission is to do all we are called to do.

Our mission is to preach the word of God, to teach the Word of God,  
and to be the Word of God.

The mission we are given by Jesus Christ is to bring salvation to others.

Just as Jesus grew into all these things, we too must first find God’s personal mission for our lives and then allow God to reveal his vision for this church.

Now I can hear many of you thinking to yourselves, “Pastor, what in the world are you talking about?”

Let me put it this way. Please turn your attention to the next slide. First, I want each and every one of you to pray about and set goals for your spiritual development in 2018.

**Slide** Your goals should answer some of these questions:

How often will you set aside time to pray for others and the church?

How much of the Bible will you read? – When, What Books?

Will you faithfully participate in a Bible Study or Small group?

How often or how many throughout the year?

Will you take time to invite people to your church – or will you take the time to learn how?

No one will ever grow without trying. You’ll never reach goals that you never set.

Anyone who is successful will tell you that it came from trying. From setting goals and striving forward to reach them.

Your origin, like Christ’s, probably has humble beginnings, but Christ was a light shining in the World for all to see...you and I can be lights like him for those around us to see. He brought ultimate grace to all – we can bring saving grace to individuals!