

# **Growth Group Questions**

Fourth Sunday in Advent ~ December 22, 2024

## **Introduction**

We've spent four Sundays preparing our hearts with as much focus as others have spent preparing their houses, their meals, their gifts, and their plans. The first recorded Christmas celebration occurred in 336 AD. It seems that for a long time Christmas took a back seat to Good Friday, Easter, and Ascension. Why do you think Christmas became so widely celebrated? Think of good reasons and bad.

## **Into the Word** – Micah 5:2-5a

1. The prophet Micah was a contemporary of Isaiah, living in a world where Assyria was the dominant superpower and Israel was a divided nation. The first three chapters of Micah describe a nation of social evil and wickedness, and the judgment God would bring for it. In chapter four God promises restoration after exile. What role does he say here that Bethlehem would play in that restoration?
2. Why is it important to note the origins of the "one from Bethlehem"?
3. In what way was Israel abandoned for a time?
4. Read Micah 4:9-10. What does the reference to "she who was in labor" mean?
5. God chose the small town of Bethlehem, just miles from the great city of Jerusalem, to be the birthplace of the Savior. If you were writing a sermon, what points might you make based on that selection of God?

## **Into the Word** – Hebrews 10:5-10

6. Why was God not pleased with Israel's sacrifices, even though they were doing what God commanded in bringing them?
7. In what ways are the sacrifices and services we offer to God just as unpleasing to him?
8. Since our sacrifices fail to please God, what did he do?
9. Describe the TWO things Jesus did to save us? (Hint: Jesus' *active* and *passive* obedience)
10. What is our only hope to be holy in the eyes of God, according to verse 10. Connect this, if you can, to the Lord's Supper.

## **Into the Word** – Luke 1:39-55

11. Who was the baby in Elizabeth's womb? How old was he? What happened when Elizabeth heard Mary's greeting? What was this baby's purpose and how do you see it here already?
12. In what ways was Mary "blessed" and "favored"? What does verse 45 reveal as the greatest blessing to Mary?
13. In what ways does the Roman Catholic Church sometimes make too much of Mary? In what ways does the Lutheran Church sometimes make too little of her?

**Closing Prayer** – Read the Magnificat together and celebrate with Mary and all the saints in God's blessing. (Verses 46-55)