

Wrapped

Scripture and Background Information for November 27-Dec.3rd.

To prepare for your group discussion each week, group members should use the **Community Group Discussion Guide** to complete the **GOD'S WORDS** and **MY WORDS** columns using the scripture below.

Have you ever had a present wrapped that you were certain you knew what was in it only to be completely surprised when you unwrapped it? In so many ways, as we consider Jesus' coming to this Earth we often think of His rescue and salvation, but is it possible we miss out on all His coming brought for us? For many of us, when it comes to our understanding of Jesus' coming, we don't take advantage of the real significance of Jesus coming. This could be for a variety of reasons, whether related to our ignorance, negligence, or even the rejection of Jesus's invitation to us to embrace the presents He bought with his blood for us (Isaiah 53). Throughout this series we are calling **Wrapped**, we will together grow in our understanding of why a savior was born to us (Isaiah 9:6-7) and get a better understanding on what it means in our present day, that Jesus came to preach the gospel to the poor, to proclaim release to the captives, and recovery of sight to the blind, to set free those who are oppressed, and to proclaim the favorable year of the Lord. All of those truths are related to this season and experiencing all of the good gifts that Christ has come for us to enjoy when the gift of his coming is completely unwrapped.

Background for Luke 4:16-30:

In Luke 4, Jesus has just encountered temptation in the wilderness and returns back to Galilee to begin his public ministry. Whereas in other spaces Jesus was met with praise and excitement, here in Nazareth the residents do not respond positively. Consider how people might respond to you in your hometown! Here in Nazareth Jesus comes face to face with residents who had known him his entire life. At the synagogue Jesus reads a familiar passage from Isaiah and declares that His coming is the fulfillment of the prophecy. The initial response is one of bewilderment as Jesus had grown up in their midst. The puzzled response turned violent when Jesus spoke of the good news coming to Gentiles (v.26-27). Jesus' invitation to the residents of Nazareth, just as it is for us, is an invite into relationship with him, not a program or process to get something from God, but to experience something with God.

Insights and questions to engage with the text:

1. As you think about the story of Jesus' birth, what themes do you typically emphasize? Which are you more prone to overlook?

Note: Much of the Old Testament has the people of Israel at the center of God's purposes. Throughout, there are moments where Gentiles are highlighted both for God's work in and through them. In v.26-27 Jesus affirms two such instances, as the widow of Zarephath and Naaman are both Gentiles, yet people who experienced God's blessing. For the residents of Nazareth, they would have taken it as an insult for Jesus to highlight Gentiles in their presence.

2. When you think about what Jesus coming to save us, typically we talk about what He saves us from, but here we see that Jesus saves us for so much more (John 10:10). When you consider what Jesus saves us for, how might this passage give you insight into what some of those things might be?
3. As you think about this Christmas, how can you live with awareness of God's presence throughout this season so that you can experience all of the blessings Christ's coming offers?

