Notes for Life Groups Series – Advent 2025 Sunday 30 November 2025

'JOY OVERCOMES FEAR' ADVENT # 1

Read Isaiah 9: 2-7 I suggest reading this passage slowly as familiarity can mask its beauty and significance.
'To us a child is born'. Many of us who have been blessed with the gift of children can immediately identify with the overwhelming joy attached to new birth. Fears associated with the birth have disappeared, hopes and plans long in the making begin, and a future of great possibilities beckons.

- *Do you see any parallels with the society to which Isaiah delivered God's message and that of our own time?*
- *Verses 6-7 contain a picture and a promise of such good news, and the final sentence is 'The zeal of the Lord Almighty will accomplish this.' Discuss.*

Read Luke 2:8-14 Again, read this passage slowly. What was promised through Isaiah has begun. No wonder the angel's first words were, "Do not be afraid". The shepherds would have been familiar with the Isaiah passage, but few, if any, were expecting something like this. Not only were the shepherds being visited by an angel but in a moment or two 'a great company of the heavenly host' would appear and further magnify the event, and their shock. The only people God chooses to tell exactly what is happening is a group of shepherds, lowest of the low in status at the time, and His choice is the first indication of the sort of revolution about to be inaugurated. Emmanuel, God with us, is no longer a shock or something to be fearful of, certainly for Jesus' followers, for whom the baby Jesus is the Saviour …. 'has been born to you, he is Christ, the Lord.' An ever-present reality who is both source and deliverer of our joy.

- Joy is very much at the centre of our Advent theme this year. What are the elements that comprise Christian joy?
- Is there a difference between happiness and joy? If so, describe how you experience that.

The Advent season is a time of preparation and anticipation. We prepare to celebrate the birth of Jesus, in thankful spiritual prayer and meditation, and we anticipate the future return of Jesus. We share our joy and celebrate in a series of worship services.

- Within your group, can you find a way, different from previous years, to help you bring refreshed focus on the birth of our Saviour? Consider using the words of carols or Christmas worship songs as a basis for prayer perhaps.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, by your grace enable our celebration of Christmas to be really a celebration of Christ. As we look back in memory and in history, seize us again with astonishment at the fact that Christ came. Amen.