***The christmas Code***

**Advent Worship Series – Week 5**

***Code Word:* Abundance**

**December 25, 2022 (*or* January 1, 2023)**

|  |
| --- |
| **WORSHIP SERVICE OUTLINE**SEach worship outline contains all elements needed for your worship service. The order of each service presented is only a *suggestion*. No doubt changes will be needed to accommodate the flow and worship style of your corps. The outlines are flexible and allow opportunities to “cut and paste” as needed. If you are blessed with instrumental or vocal music resources, you may find there is more structured material here than needed. Sermon manuscripts are included as a *sample* and not to be preached verbatim. |

[*One of the goals of this service is to invite Christmas volunteers, i.e. kettle workers, social service volunteers, etc., to a Sunday morning service at The Salvation Army. During the service there are many opportunities for them to take part. The use of the word ‘volunteer’ below is used to refer to one of these individuals, not a volunteer from the congregation.*]

**[*Project* “Week 5.QRCode”***(in Graphics file)* ***or below words on screen as people enter*]**

|  |
| --- |
| **Code Word: Abundance*****Jesus was born to die in our place so that we who were dead*** ***would be born again to new life.***  |

|  |
| --- |
| **Drama – Once or Twice** |

**Call to Worship:**

Jesus was born to give us life. One of the beautiful things about the Christmas story is that it doesn’t offer just my past forgiveness and future hope, but everything I need right here, right now.

* Jesus came so that I would have everything I need to fight the discouraging battle with private sin.
* Jesus came so that I would have everything I need to have a peaceful relationship with my angry neighbor.
* Jesus came so that I could stand against the temptations of racism and prejudice.
* Jesus came so that I could forge with my spouse a marriage of unity, understanding, and love.
* Jesus came so that I could parent my children with patient wisdom and grace.
* Jesus came so that I could face the realities of life in a fallen world without doubt or despair.

I love how 2 Peter 1:3 captures the work of Jesus Christ for each one of us: *“By his divine power, God has given us everything we need for living a godly life.”* (NLT)

(*Come Let Us Adore Him*, pp. 139-140)

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **SB#73/HC#141/SS#28 – All hail the power**  | TB-306 – CoronationHC-141SS-28 | HTD5-T5 (4 vs.)HCD13-T11 |
|  **Additional Optional Songs** |
| **SB#114/HC#146/SS#137 – Light of the world (Here I am to worship)**  | TB-653 – Here I am to worshipHC-146SS-137 | No HT CDHCD13-T16 |
| **SB#358/HC#241/SS#30 – Crown Him with many crowns** | TB-162 – DiademataHC-241SS-30 | HTD1-T8 (4 vs.)HCD23-T11 |

**Responsive Scripture**

**[Option: have volunteers be Reader 1 & 2 instead of “All”]**

**Leader:** **1** Simon Peter, a servant and emissary of Jesus the Anointed One, to those who have received the same precious faith we share through the righteousness of our God and Savior, Jesus the Anointed. **2**I wish you a full measure of grace and peace *as you grow* in the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord.

**All:** **3**His divine power has given us everything we need to experience life and to reflect God’s true nature through the knowledge of the One who called us by His glory and virtue. **4**Through these things, we have received God’s great and valuable promises, so we might escape the corruption of worldly desires and share in the divine nature.

**Leader:** God took the first step to rescue us from this corrupt world. He has granted us His power, revealed to us true knowledge, and spoken to us great promises. He has done all this for a reason: that we might participate in His own nature and reflect His own life. But we are not passive observers of God’s saving actions. We must receive His grace, grow in knowledge, and join Him in this work of redemption.

**All:** **5**To achieve this, you will need to add virtue to your faith, and then knowledge to your virtue; **6**to knowledge, add discipline; to discipline, add endurance; to endurance, add godliness; **7**to godliness, add affection for others as sisters and brothers; and to affection, *at last,* add love.

**Leader:** **8**For if you possess these traits and multiply them, then you will never be ineffective or unproductive in your relationship with our Lord Jesus the Anointed; **9**but if you don’t have these qualities, then you will be nearsighted and blind, forgetting that your past sins have been washed away.

(2 Peter 1:1-9, The Voice)

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **SB#453/SS#78 – Amazing grace! How sweet the sound****---------------****HC#248 – Amazing grace (My chains are gone)** | TB-57 – Amazing Grace! SS-78HC-248 | HTD3-T2 (4 vs.) HCD23-T18 |
|  **Additional Optional Songs** |
| **SB#32/HC#127 – How deep the Father’s love for us** | TB-663 – sameHC-127 | No HT CDHCD11-T17 |
| **SB#49/HC#274 – How great thou art!** | TB-488 – sameHC-274 | HTD1-T12 (4 vs.)HCD26-T14 |
| **SB#243/HC#164 – Before the throne of God above**  | TB-52 – same HC-164 | No HT CDHCD15-T14 |
| **SB#439/HC#139 – There is a message** | TB-879 – same HC-139 | No HT CDHCD12-T19 |
| **SB#376/HC#219 – King of kings, majesty** | TB-722 – same HC-219 | No HT CDHCD20-T19 |
| **SB#736/HC#102/SS#115 – Tell me what to do to be pure (Whiter than the snow)** | TB-932 – sameHC-102SS-115 | HTD9-T19 (3 vs.) HCD9-T12 |
| **HC#123/SS#55 – Shine on Us** | HC-123SS-55 | HCD11-T13 |
| **SB#830/HC#189/SS#79 – Come, Thou Fount of every blessing**  | TB-374 – NettletonHC-189SS-79 | No HT CDHCD17-T19 |

**Prayers of the People:**

**[Ask volunteers to pray the following prayers…]**

**Prayer #1:**

Eternal God and Father by the power of Your eternal gospel I have been born again to eternal life. Your enduring Word is an eternal seed, and now I, as the fruit of that seed, will live forever. Amen.

(*The NIV Worship Bible*, page 1639)

**Prayer #2:**

Lord Jesus, by Your blood You cleanse me, by Your mercy You save me, by Your resurrection You give me hope. By Your faithfulness and power, You protect me in a fallen and polluted world. By Your wisdom You sustain me through the fiery trials that must refine my life. By all of these You bring out the very best of everything You have placed within me. How can I help but live to give You praise! Though I do not see You, I love You more than words can say. Amen.

(*The NIV Worship Bible*, page 1638)

**Prayer #3:**

O God, by Your Spirit set Your hand upon me that I might prosper in my quest to show forth Your praise in the world. Do not allow the darkness around me, nor the dark desires within me, to gain any advantage against my soul. Strengthen me with Your Word, secure me in Your mercy and fill me with Your Spirit. Let the goodness of Your work within me give rise to Your worship around me. Amen.

(*The NIV Worship Bible*, page 1639)

**Pastoral Prayer**

**Announcements and Offering**

|  |
| --- |
| **Children’s Moment – Abundance** |

**Testimony from a Christmas Volunteer**

**Sermon – Code Word: Abundance**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **SB#445 – Turn your eyes upon Jesus** | TB-904 – same  | No HT CD |
|  **Additional Optional Songs** |
| **SB#118/SS#195/CF#8 – O little town of Bethlehem** | TB-136 – sameSS-195 CF-8 | HTD3-T5 (3 vs.) |
| **SB#124/SS#196/CF#25 – Silent night! Holy night!**  | TB-842 – Stille NachtSS-196CF-25 | HTD4-T15 (3 vs.) |
| **SB#376/HC#219 – King of kings, majesty** | TB-722 – same HC-219 | No HT CDHCD20-T19 |
| **SB#402/HC#186/SS#73 – When I look into Your holiness** | TB-927 – same HC-186SS-73 | No HT CDHCD17-T16 |
| **SB#439/HC#139 – There is a message** | TB-879 – same HC-139 | No HT CDHCD12-T19 |
| **HC#120 – In the Manger** | HC-120 | HCD10-T20 |
| **HC#123/SS#55 – Shine on Us** | HC-123SS-55 | HCD11-T13 |
| **HC#169 – Hallelujah** | HC-169 | HCD15-T19 |
| **HC#187 – Jesus, Messiah** | HC-187 | HCD17-T17 |
| **HC#220 – Incarnate** | HC-220 | HCD20-T20 |
| **HC#136 – We All Bow Down** | HC-136 | HCD12-T16 |

**Benediction**

**5** To him who loves us and has freed us from our sins by his blood, **6**and has made us to be a kingdom and priests to serve his God and Father—to him be glory and power for ever and ever! Amen.

**Revelation 1:5-6**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **SB#89/HC#161/SS#48 – O for a thousand tongues to sing (My great Redeemer’s praise)** | TB-75 – Grimsby HC-161SS-48 | No HT CDHCD15-T11 |
|  **Additional Optional Songs** |
| **SB#77/HC#151/SS#31 – Fairest Lord Jesus** | TB-206 – Ascalon HC-151SS-31 | HTD5-T1 (3 vs.)HCD14-T11 |
| **SB#861/HC#149/SS#41 – In Christ alone** | TB-132 – same HC-149SS-41 | No HT CDHCD13-T19 |

**NOTE:** Unless otherwise noted, scripture quotations are taken from the New International Version (NIV). © 2011 by Zondervan. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

|  |
| --- |
| **Advent 2022 Week #5** |
| **DRAMA****Once or Twice****By Martyn Scott Thomas**© Copyright 2021 by Martyn Scott Thomas. All rights reserved. Used by permission. |
| **Topic:** | Faith, lifestyle |
| **Scripture:** | 2 Peter 1:3-9 |
| **Synopsis:** | A man who seldom attends church shows up looking for something more. |
| **Characters:** | Simon – a “Chreaster”Stan – his pastor |
| **Props/Costumes:** | Casual dress. A row of 3 or 4 chairs. |
| **Setting:** | The lobby of a church. |
| **Running time:** | 3 minutes |

[*Simon enters and paces uneasily. He sits briefly, then stands and paces again.*]

**Stan:** [*enters, starts walking past Simon, then stops*] Simon? Is that you?

**Simon:** Oh hi, Stan. [*sits*]

**Stan:** [*a bit surprised*] What are you doing here?

**Simon:** [*stands*] Well, it is Sunday, and this is church, so . . .

**Stan:** Are you dropping off Trish and the kids?

**Simon:** [*sits*] Yes. [*pause*] I mean, no. [*uncertain*] Kind of both, I guess.

**Stan:** [*sits next to Simon*] Are you okay?

**Simon:** I’m alright. It’s just that . . . [*pause*]

**Stan:** You know you can tell me anything, right?

**Simon:** Yeah, I know. It’s just that I’ve never felt like this before.

**Stan:** Like what?

**Simon:** Well, you know that I’m only here a couple of times a year.

**Stan:** Yes, I do. And we have a name for that.

**Simon:** You do?

**Stan:** Yes. You’re a Chreaster.

**Simon:** A what?

**Stan:** A Chreaster. You’re someone who only comes to church on Christmas and Easter Sundays.

**Simon:** That’s a little insulting, don’t you think?

**Stan:** Yes, it is. And I apologize. I didn’t mean to make light of that fact. I know you’re a good man who loves God and loves his family.

**Simon:** But you’re not completely wrong.

**Stan:** So, I’ll ask again. What are you doing here, [*slight pause*] today?

**Simon:** I’m thinking that maybe I need to be here more often.

**Stan:** That’s good. How often are you thinking?

**Simon:** I think maybe every week.

**Stan:** [*surprised*] Well, that’s great! What brought this on?

**Simon:** I don’t know. It just feels like I’m missing out on something.

**Stan:** [*agreeing*] I think you are.

**Simon:** I mean, I know Jesus was born and died and rose again. And I’ve always thought that was all I needed. But there are a lot of days in between Christmas and Easter.

**Stan:** Yes, there are.

**Simon:** And there’s so much more to his story than those two events that I need to learn.

**Stan:** I think you’ve come to the right place. And you know we’re open every day of the week.

**Simon:** Really?

**Stan:** Yes, we have Bible studies, children’s programs, adult ministries.

**Simon:** And anyone can come to those?

**Stan:** Anyone.

**Simon:** There are definitely days I really need more of something to get me through.

**Stan:** It’s almost like you need Jesus every day.

**Simon:** Exactly. So instead of just dropping off Trish and the kids today, I thought I might stick around.

**Stan:** Well, I’m glad you’re here.

**Simon:** I’m not making any promises. Let’s just see how this goes.

**Stan:** [*stands*] Shall we go into the chapel?

**Simon:** [*stands*] I guess. So, how does this work? Are there assigned seats?

**Stan:** [*starting to walk*] No, there are no assigned seats, although some people do have their favorite spots. But families usually sit together.

**Simon:** [*walking with Stan*] Oh yeah. Right. I guess I should look for Trish.

**Stan:** That would be a good place to start. I’m sure she’s saved a seat for you.

**Simon:** Do you have one of those sermon things every week?

**Stan:** Yes. And this week, I’m speaking on 2nd Peter.

**Simon:** Do you think you can keep it under 15 minutes? My stomach starts growling around 11:45. [*emphasizing*] It could get loud.

**Stan:** I’ll see what I can do.

**Simon:** Great. [*exiting*] Have you guys ever thought about serving refreshments? It could help supplement your offering.

**Stan:** [*following Simon*] I’ll bring that up at the next council meeting.

[*Blackout*]

***The christmas Code***

**Children’s Moment – Week 5**

***Code Word:*** **Abundance**

**December 25, 2022 (*or* January 1, 2023)**

**Written by Katie Laidlaw**

**Synopsis:** *The Christmas Code* Children’s Messages are given from the perspective of Gabriel, the angel. Gabriel’s perspective is meant to help children understand the narrative of the Christmas story, while encouraging application, and remembrance of the true meaning of Christmas.

**Set-Up/Staging:** Invite children to come to the front, either having them stand or sit for the lesson. (I personally recommend having the children stand, as this helps keep them attentive, engaged, and involved in the lesson—especially with the dynamic of the congregation watching them. In this more public/formal setting, sitting provides a more relaxed/informal mindset, allowing the children to disengage and merely be present in the moment.)

**Props:** Halo, wings, white shirt

|  |
| --- |
| **Week 5 – Abundance**  |

***Script:***

Hi, friends! This is our last week together – I know, I’m sad too! I have one last bit of inside scoop to give you about the Christmas story.

Let’s see… where were we… Ah, yes! Jesus, the Savior is born!

Now, many people think that when Jesus came to earth to save us from our sin, it was only to give us eternal life in heaven. While this is a nice part of the gift of Jesus, it isn’t what the gift of Jesus is all about.

Jesus said: *“I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly.”* (John 10:10, NRSV)

What do you think abundantly means? [*Allow children to answer*]

Abundantly means “filled to overflowing.” Have you ever seen a pot of water on a stove? Once the water heats up with the heat of the stove, the water begins to boil. The longer you let the water boil at full heat, the water will rise up and overflow over the sides of the pot.

Our lives should show an overflow of God’s promises, hope, incarnation and good news. When our lives overflow with all of these things, we are living the abundant life God has planned for us. Jesus was born so that we could have a full life of joy, peace and love—not only to look forward to in heaven, but here and now as well.

Sometimes we think that living an “abundant” or “overflowing” life means to have a life with lots of stuff, a busy life or a life where we are surrounded by a lot of people. But, when we live a life of abundance, it means that seeds have been planted in our lives, that have grown and sprouted – and others can see and enjoy the fruit that we have grown! A good example of how an abundant life looks includes the fruit of the Spirit.

Can you name the fruits of the Spirit? [*Allow children to answer*]

Jesus is God’s promise that God will fill our lives abundantly until we are finally in heaven with Him.

Our lives should be filled and overflowing with the love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control, perfectly shown to us by Jesus. We can live our lives by following the example of the greatest gift and share this abundant life and amazing gift with those around us. If we are truly filled to overflowing, people shouldn’t help but notice that there is something different about us and see Jesus through how we live our lives.

How are you going to live an abundant life in Jesus? What are some ways to overflow with Jesus in our lives? [*Allow children to answer*]

[*End with prayer*.]

**Main Points:**

* Jesus said: *“I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly.”* (John 10:10, NRSV)
* Our lives should show an overflow of God’s promises, hope, incarnation and good news. When our lives overflow with all of these things, we are living the abundant life God has planned for us.
* When we live a life of abundance, it means that seeds have been planted in our lives, that have grown and sprouted – and others can see and enjoy the fruit that we have grown!
* If we are truly filled to overflowing, people shouldn’t help but notice that there is something different about us and see Jesus through our lives.

**Questions:**

* What does abundantly/abundance mean?
* How are you going to live an abundant life in Jesus?
* What are some ways to overflow with Jesus in our lives?

***The christmas Code***

**Advent Sermon – Week 5**

***Code Word:* Abundance**

**December 25, 2022 (*or* January 1, 2023)**

**By Major Catherine Mount**

***Jesus was born to die in our place so that we who were dead***

***would be born again to new life.***

**TITLE: *Abundant Life***

**SCRIPTURE:** **2 Peter 1:2-11**

**INTRODUCTION:**

How have you experienced abundance? Did anyone experience an abundance of presents at their house recently? How about an abundance of food? Dare I say, sweets and desserts? I know I had more than my fair share! But abundance goes both ways – there are also many who have experienced an abundance of grief, or stress, or heartache. Abundance is not a foreign concept to us, but what we want to consider today is if we are experiencing abundance in our walk with Jesus.

**SERIES CONTEXT**:

During these past weeks of Advent we have focused on some Christmas Codewords: God’s promises, hope, incarnation, gospel, Jesus, and today: abundance. All of these words unlock the mystery and the beauty of the Christmas season, and today’s is a powerful promise for us to claim.

**G.O.S.P.E.L. POSTERBOARDS:** [*from last week*]

Now to move forward, I’ll need a few volunteers to help us remember last week’s GOSPEL message that we were taught. **G.** God, **O.** Our, **S.** Sins, **P.** Paying, **E.** Everyone, **L.** Life.

Excellent! We remember the gospel. Today is all about the ‘L’: **L**ife starts now and lasts forever. If Jesus Christ is not your personal Savior and friend, you’ll want to listen closely, because today’s topic just might be the best part of saving grace – OR, if you are follower of Jesus and confess him as your Savior, you get to listen to – and consider if you’re experiencing a relationship with God to its fullest.

**READ: 2 Peter 1:1-3**

**SCRIPTURE CONTEXT**:

Let’s remember what abundant means: overflowing, multiplying to you, abounding. A believer’s life is abundant NOW, because God’s grace was abundant at the manger, at the cross, at His throne, AND in the future.

In verse 2, the greeting says: *“Grace and peace be yours in abundance through the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord.”* Who needs **abundant** grace? (Would you only want a little bit of grace?) How about Peace?! We have ***access*** to ABUNDANT GRACE and PEACE. His grace. His peace. When you think God’s reached the limit, He gives it more. It is abundant. It is overflowing. Why would we expect anything less? This code word is a fulfilled promise, and I think that there are days where we are really missing it in our everyday lives.

**PURSUE ABUNDANCE THROUGH GODLINESS:**

Look at verse 3: *“His divine power has given us everything we need for a godly life through our knowledge of him who called us by his own glory and goodness.”*

Now, let’s be honest, it’s tempting to read just the beginning of this verse (His divine power has given us everything we need) and to stop right there, and then be mad at God for not giving us everything we think we need. To say things like, “God, I need this . . . to be successful”, or “God, I need this . . . to be more effective.”

But that is not the point of this verse – what is God giving us everything we need to accomplish? A godly life. Look at what the Word says: GODLINESS, for a godly life. What do you think about this scripture? Do you agree with it? Do you think it is impossible? Remember Jesus’ words in Matthew 19:26: *“with God everything is possible.”* He also says in Mark 9:23, that *“all things are possible for the one who believes.”* So with that in mind, consider the audacity of these verses: **READ: 2 Peter 1:3-4**.

Here is the challenge: are you living a godly life? Do you pursue godliness? Now, don’t make this weird and make yourself a deity. We’ve got enough people in this world walking around thinking they are a ‘little g’ god. But really think about the ABUNDANT life God has for you – are you living it? Godliness doesn’t mean you’re a super holy, righteous pharisee who never breaks a rule, and sleeps in his Salvation Army uniform. It is beautifully described in the Vines Bible Dictionary as this: a “**Godward attitude, doing that which is well-pleasing to Him.”** God has given you everything you need to be godly.

Here is the simple truth for us this Christmas season as we head into a new year: if we all start practicing having a **godward attitude** in our **everyday living,** then we will be different. We’ll look differently, we’ll act differently, we’ll speak differently, we’ll think differently than the rest of the world. The truth is we’ll be engaged in the ABUNDANT living that Jesus has promised. And here’s what’s helpful about how the apostle Peter wrote this letter. He gives the challenges to pursue godliness, and THEN he says, “Here’s what it looks like.”

**LIVE ABUNDANTLY THROUGH GODLINESS: Read: 2 Peter 1:5-7.**

*“For this very reason, make every EFFORT…”* (v. 5). Let’s stop right there. I don’t want anyone to get held up on the word *effort.* The NASB says, *“Now for this very reason also, applying all DILIGENCE…”*

On a scale of 1 to 10 (lowest to highest), how much **effort** (how much diligence) do you spend on your spiritual formation? On your relationship with the triune God? Remember, God has given you EVERYTHING you need to develop spiritually, to consistently look ‘godward’. When you look at this list of virtues, are they evident in your life?

I think it is important to point out that people who are NOT believers can still develop these characteristics and care about them and think these are good concepts to pursue. But the two key words that separate this list of virtues from simply making us into ‘good people’ are the words **faith** and **godliness**. It’s the motive and the outcome. Remember FAITH is the foundation of the list. Without faith you are simply just being a good person, and that is NOT the gospel (remember sins can’t be repaid from our good works). As believers, we don’t commit to a set of virtues because we want to be good, but because we have **access to** and are **FILLED by** the Holy Spirit. And as a result, we can pursue the virtue of godliness—that godward attitude.

Let’s look at the full list of characteristics we’ve just read and ask the questions:

* How is your effort in developing godliness?
* *Add to your faith* ***goodness*** (v. 5) – How is your effort in developing goodness? Do you have integrity? Do you practice being a person of integrity, doing what is right, even when it is difficult?
* *Add to goodness* ***knowledge*** (v. 5) – How is your diligence in developing knowledge? Now this isn’t referring to the ‘saving grace’ knowledge of having Jesus as your Savior, rather, it’s this idea of engaging in an ongoing development of discernment that is gained by experience. It’s reflected in how well you ‘know’ our Lord. Do you spend time in His Word and in fellowship with Him through prayer? And as you are developing knowledge of God remember that “intellectual faith without a personal relationship with Jesus Christ is ineffective.” I can read an autobiography and know all about somebody and not ‘know’ them because there is no personal relationship. So, in diligently pursuing knowledge, that has to be coupled with relationship, not simply bible trivia.
* *Add to knowledge,* ***self-control*** (v. 6) – How is your effort in developing self-control? (Personally, I kind of wish this virtue wasn’t on the list!) Oh, the struggle. In the Message paraphrase, it describes self-control as *‘alert discipline’*. Really, are we mindful? And purposeful? Do we show restraint in a world that is overflowing with consumption and free will? How’s our self-control?
* *Add to self-control,* ***perseverance*** (v. 6) – How is your effort in developing perseverance—this concept of being “passionately patient”? James 1:12 says: ***12****Blessed is the one who perseveres under trial because, having stood the test, that person will receive the crown of life that the Lord has promised to those who love him.”* Do you trust and hope in the Lord, regardless of your circumstances?
* And then finally in verse 7, ***brotherly kindness/mutual affection*** *and* ***love*** – These are two different Greek words, but part of the same ‘love’ family. How are you doing with loving others? How about with loving your enemies? I’m pretty sure we all still need growth in this area. The Apostle Peter bookends this list with FAITH and LOVE. Because of our faith in Jesus Christ, love is possible.

That’s a lot of self-evaluating questions, but at the root of this scripture, the question is not “do you have these virtues?”—because if the Holy Spirit is in you, then you DO already have them. The question is, “are you making any EFFORT to develop them?” Do you try? Are you diligent? Intentional? The truth is, we each have a choice to respond to God’s grace with obedience or to respond with disobedience

**CHALLENGE:**

Are you living the abundant life? Is the Holy Spirit overflowing in your mind? In your behavior? In your love for others? Don’t let Satan’s arrow take hold in your mind, in your attitude, or in your habits. The Word of God says that we have everything we need to live a holy life! But are we living like we do? Are we letting the Holy Spirit shape us?

I think part of the reason Jesus came to this Earth as a baby is because even if the circumstances around a birth are difficult, there is an *abundant* joy and hopefulness that we experience with new life. Just go spend some time with a newborn and you will be filled with joy and hope. The good news of Jesus—the good news of this season of celebration—is that regardless of the garbage going on in the world, we CAN have abundant life amidst the chaos.

Let’s finish in the last verses of this section. **READ: 2 Peter 1:8-11**.

Don’t be blind to the abundant promises that Jesus has for you right now. **Open your eyes and live abundantly!**

Sing: *Turn your eyes upon Jesus*.

Turn your eyes upon Jesus,

Look full in His wonderful face,

And the things of earth will grow strangely dim
  In the light of His glory and grace.

- Helen Howarth Lemmel (1863-1961)

**NOTE:** Unless otherwise noted, scripture quotations are taken from the New International Version (NIV). © 2011 by Zondervan. Used by permission. All rights reserved.