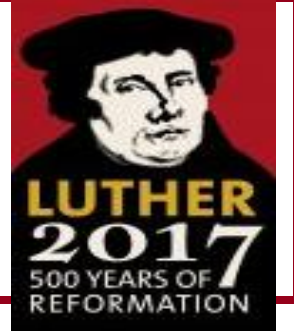


Grace upon Grace!

Isaiah 9:2-7 Galatians 4:4-7 Matthew 1:18-25

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And there were shepherds living out in the fields nearby, keeping watch over their flocks at night. An angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. But the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid. I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people. Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; He is Christ the Lord. This will be a sign to you: you will find a baby wrapped in clothes and lying in a manger." Suddenly a great company of the heavenly host appeared with the angel, praising God and saying, "Glory to God in the highest, and peace on earth, goodwill toward men." Luke 2

The angels sang "Glory to God in the Highest!" when Jesus was born in Bethlehem! The **Glory of God** is the *majesty of His presence*; it is the *display of His power*; it is the *brightness of His salvation*. The **Glory of God** captures *all the attributes of God* in **splendor and grandeur**.

All of this glory is wrapped up in Jesus! Jesus is the **Glory of God** in a person; the **Glory of God** in a baby born in Bethlehem! Here is how St. John records it:

The Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen **His glory**, the **GLORY** of the one and only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth. JOHN 1:14

Glory is a divine attribute that is given to Jesus. The **Glory of Jesus** teaches us that He is God Himself, the second Person of the Holy Trinity. **The Christmas story is pictured in the Gospel of John as God the Creator coming into the world to bring life and light to His sin-darkened, lifeless world.** Jesus is God the Creator; equal to the Father and equal to the Holy Spirit. The **Glory of God given to Jesus** teaches us that He Himself is God. We

confess this in the Apostles' Creed when we say, *He was conceived by the Holy Spirit and born of the Virgin Mary.*

**In Jesus you find the very presence and power of God Himself
Who brings eternal salvation to all people!**

That is what Christmas is all about!

Jesus was born in Bethlehem with the full intention of dying on a cross in Jerusalem. The **glory of Jesus** that will be sung about in eternity is not His birth, but His death for all people. God Himself, Jesus, has come into the world to save the world!

The way that John describes eternal salvation is with the terms **GRACE** and **TRUTH**. *The Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen His glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth.*

The **GRACE** and **TRUTH** of God
is found only in Jesus, the One born in
Bethlehem.

Remember the word “**grace**” means **GIFT**. Every blessing we have from God is a gift. **Chief of these gifts is the forgiveness of sins.** That is what Christmas is about. The reason the Son of God came into the world was to earn forgiveness for you and all people.

† Jesus **lived** a sinless, holy, and pure life, completely obedient to the Ten Commandments. He never sinned. His sinless, holy and pure life is credited to you through faith, and God considers you to be sinless, pure and holy.

- † Jesus **died** a sacrificial death on the cross in your place; taking up your sins and guilt and dying in your place. He died and was buried with your sin and guilt.
- † Three days later, He **rose** from the dead! In His resurrection, God the Father declares that you and all people are forgiven! Your sins have been paid for! You are reconciled to God the Father!

This is the GRACE and TRUTH of God!

This is the reason why the Son of God
was born in Bethlehem!

Christmas begins Jesus' journey to the cross.
Jesus' birth in Bethlehem will lead to His death in
Jerusalem.

That's good news for us who need God's grace and truth in our lives. ***Because of our sin, we deserve His wrath, not His grace!*** Sin is a dark reality in our lives; guilt is a heavy burden; death is a frightening enemy. Sin completely destroys us so that we cannot even help save ourselves if we wanted to. We need God's GRACE and TRUTH; we need the Savior born in Bethlehem for us!

When you hear about God's GRACE and TRUTH in Christ, faith is created, and your sins are forgiven. This Christmas, know and believe beyond a shadow of doubt that your sins are forgiven because of Jesus! Don't push it away; don't deny it; don't minimize it. Believe that Jesus is your God, Creator, and Savior who forgives your sins!

One way that the Apostle John reassures us of Jesus' non-stop GRACE and TRUTH in our lives is by using the phrase "**GRACE UPON GRACE**". Here is what he wrote:

From His fullness we have all received **grace upon grace**. JOHN 1:16

The **fullness of Christ** is WHO He is and WHAT He has done for us! Jesus is your God, Creator, and Savior who forgives your sins!

Like waves on an ocean that keeping rolling in and never ending, God's grace continually comes to you because Christ, and it never ends!

- † **Grace upon Grace** is how the Bible describes **God's love, kindness, and blessings to you!**
- † **Grace upon Grace** is a way to say ALL the **abundance** of God's grace that is freely given to you! All the gifts of salvation are freely given to you! You are not lacking anything!
- † **Grace upon Grace** is meant to reassure you and comfort you and encourage you! **God's grace is a constant in your life**; it never stops; it never turns away; it never slows down; it never gets weary. Every moment of every day of your life, you have God's "**grace upon grace**". **God's grace is a constant in your life**; it gives you stability in difficult times; and it strengthens you for daily living as a disciple!

On this Christmas Eve morning, we celebrate the glory of Jesus; God Himself who was born in Bethlehem to bring us **grace and truth**.

In Him, and only in Him, do we have God's grace upon grace!
Like waves on an ocean that keeping rolling in and never ending, God's grace continually comes to you in Christ, and it never ends!

Amen!