Study 1

**We are invited to make a pilgrimage –
into the heart and life of God**

Dallas Willard, *The Divine Conspiracy*, p. 11

Advent, Week One – Hope

In the darkness of the world around us, God offers us an invitation to a life of hope, a life in Him.

*Scripture:*

Arise, shine; for your light has come, and the glory of the Lord has risen upon you. For darkness shall cover the earth, and thick darkness the peoples; but the Lord will arise upon you, and his glory will appear over you. Isaiah 60:1-2

In that region there were shepherds living in the fields, keeping watch over their flock by night. Then an angel of the Lord stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. But the angel said to them, “Do not be afraid; for see – I am bringing you good news of great joy for all the people: to you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is the Messiah, the Lord. Luke 2:8-11

This Spirit he poured out on us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior, so that, having been justified by his grace, we might become heirs according to the hope of eternal life. The saying is sure. Titus 3:6-7

*Voice of wisdom:*

“(Today) the mantle of intellectual meaninglessness shrouds every aspect of our common life. Events, things, and “information” flood over us, overwhelming us, disorienting us with threats and possibilities we for the most part have no idea what to do about. Commercials, catch words, political slogans, and high-flying intellectual rumors clutter our mental and spiritual space. Our minds and bodies pick them up like a dark suit picks up lint…..And yet we have to act. The rocket of our life is off the pad. Action is forever. We are becoming who we will be - forever. Absurdity and cuteness are fine to chuckle over and perhaps to muse upon. But they are no place to live. They provide no shelter or direction for being human.

Yet, in the gloom a light glimmers and glows. We have received an invitation. We are invited to make a pilgrimage - into the heart and life of God. The invitation has long been on public record. You can hardly look anywhere across the human scene and not encounter it. It is literally ‘blowing in the wind.’ A door of welcome seems open to everyone without exception. No person or circumstance other than our own decision can keep us away. ‘Whosoever will may come’….God’s desire for us is that we should live in him. He sends among us the Way to himself. That shows what, in his heart of hearts, God is really like - indeed, what reality is really like. In its deepest nature and meaning our universe is a community of boundless and totally competent love.

God makes himself and his kingdom available, not in every way human beings have imagined, surely, but in a simple way….The Way we speak of is Jesus….Jesus offers himself as God’s doorway into the life that is truly life. Confidence in him leads us today, as in other times, to become his apprentices in eternal living.”

(Dallas Willard, *The Divine Conspiracy*, pgs. 9-12.)
Contemplation:

What key words and ideas stand out to you? How do they help you take a deeper look at God's invitation of hope in Him?

Do you believe you can pilgrimage “into the heart and life of God” and be part of a “community of boundless and totally competent love”? What would that process look like?

What does it mean for you to have confidence in Jesus and to be one of his “apprentices in eternal living”?

Practices:

Write down one or two of the key phrases that are important to you. Hold them (literally) before God and wait silently on him. Record any further thoughts he may give you.

Spend some time this week in Luke 2, the whole chapter. Read slowly, picturing what it would have been like to be there, to hear what the Spirit is saying to you, to understand it in terms of your life. Journal about your insights.