

Written Copy: Luke 2:10-15 “Where to Find Joy and Peace”

Christmas Day (Christmas Dawn)

Sunday, December 25th, 2022

Text: Luke 2:10-15

¹⁰ And the angel said to them, "Fear not, for behold, I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people. ¹¹ For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord. ¹² And this will be a sign for you: you will find a baby wrapped in swaddling cloths and lying in a manger." ¹³ And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God and saying, ¹⁴ "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace among those with whom he is pleased!" ¹⁵ When the angels went away from them into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, "Let us go over to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has made known to us."

Exegetical Statement (the text's context)

The LORD sends His angelic messenger, not to the king or nobles, but to the working-class shepherds. Even though the angel appears in the glory of God, indicating He comes from God's presence the angel tells the shepherds to stop being afraid. Her comes not with a message of judgment but one of good news of great joy for all those who believe in God. Born in the city of David is the one promised to come from David's line, the Messiah, who is the Christ (the anointed one), and what's more He is the Lord God Himself come in human flesh. The angel gives them the sign of how to recognize they've found this special Child: wrapped up tightly in strips of cloth and lying in the humblest of settings, and animal's feeding trough. Then a great assembly of the army of angelic beings fill the sky and sing praise and give thanks to God for this glorious gift, and to declare peace to all on earth with whom God will bestow His good favor. This awe-inspiring announcement moves the shepherds to go and seek out the child they've been told about. They find Him, and Mary and Joseph, just as the angel had said. And after finding and seeing they declare all around the town what the angel had told them about this child. And all who heard were awestruck at their message. Mary, however, kept all that she heard within herself and pondered it in her heart. The shepherds returned to their flock giving praise and thanksgiving to God for all they had heard and seen.

Focus Statement:

The true message of peace and joy comes from the announcement of the gift of God that came on Christmas night. The One who came to bring salvation through His work on the cross and the empty tomb. The work of salvation, forgiveness of sins, that is poured out upon us richly and abundantly in our baptism. It renews within us the image of God lost in the Fall and restores us as His precious children. Through Christ's work given to us in baptism we are declared to be innocent of all sinful charges and right with God. We are made to be at peace with Him now, and will live at peace in His presence for eternity. This brings a joy that supersedes all sources of earthly happiness.

Function Statement:

Why it's important to know:

During this Christmas season we are in need of a message that takes away fear and brings peace and joy. But that message cannot be found in what is going on around us.

What the hearer should do as a result:

Look for true peace and joy in our relationship to God as baptized children through faith in Christ. We are at peace with Him, so that whatever happens is not His punishment but serves to keep us in faith to life everlasting. This brings the joy that is not of human origin but is created and sustained by the gift of the indwelling Spirit.

Subject Sentence: The Source of Joy and Peace Is Christmas Message

Introduction

Alright, who was it that was praying for a White Christmas? I know, you had a vision in your mind of that perfect Christmas morning, didn't you? The one where it's snowy outside, yet warm inside. Maybe there's a fire burning in the fireplace. Family gathered around. Tons of presents under the tree. Everybody smiling. Everybody happy. Christmas dinner on the table with all the fixings. The Norman Rockwell / Hallmark Channel Christmas scene, right? Something worthy of the angelic announcement from our Gospel Lesson of peace and joy given that first Christmas.

Well, we got the snow, didn't we. The rest of that scene this Christmas morning...maybe not so much. We forgot the reality that comes with the snow and the cold, the icy treacherous roads. The kind that I experienced the other day driving down Van Slyke by the engine plant. I was only going 25 to 30 mph. The light changed at Atherton and I applied the brakes, and nothing happened. Well, not exactly nothing. The antilock braking system engaged. I could feel the pedal pumping, but the car wasn't stopping, and the intersection was getting closer and closer. That's enough to take away any peace or joy I might've been experiencing.

And if you are going out again later today, or if family is coming to you, they will arrive with the stress of the travel on their hearts and minds. In fact, it may mean that some, if not all of your holiday guests, will decide not to risk it and stay home. Along with that additional stress, there is all the normal stress that isn't included in that idyllic Christmas picture: the shopping for presents, (which this year was made even more difficult this year with the weather). There is the wrapping of presents, the cooking, the cleaning the house, the getting all things ready, the packing the car and making sure you have everything you need to take. Add to that the extra chores of cleaning the car off, shoveling and salting. It's enough to sap the Christmas peace and joy right out of you.

The Angelic Pronouncement of Peace and Joy

You heard in the Gospel Lesson the angel announcement concerning peace and joy at the first Christmas. Perhaps it would be good to take another look at that.

Luke 2:10-14 ¹⁰ And the angel said to them, "Fear not, for behold, I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people. ¹¹ For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord. ¹² And this will be a sign for you: you will find a baby wrapped in swaddling cloths and lying in a manger." ¹³ And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God and saying, ¹⁴ "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace among those with whom he is pleased!"

The angel told the shepherds to stop being afraid because he had good news of great joy. He was the Lord God's messenger pronouncing peace to those with whom the Lord is pleased. It's the "Good News" that is to bring them and us "great joy". Another word for Good News is "Gospel", and that is really the announcement that the angel is making. It's the fulfillment of the promise of old that God would send the Savior, the one promised, who would save us from our sins and the judgement that those sins deserve, eternal separation from our Creator God. The Lord had fulfilled that promise, and the proof of that was lying in a manger wrapped in swaddling cloth.

Now we know the rest of the story that the shepherds had not yet been witness to. That baby would grow into the man, Jesus of Nazareth, the One who is the Son of God (divine) and yet the Son of Man (fully human), both the divine and human natures co-existing in the one person: Jesus. We know what He accomplished in His 30-some years on earth. He lived the perfect sinless life, and then gave up that life in suffering and death on the cross. This is the way God came to be our Savior, to take our place and die our death, so that we might be forgiven of all our sins. And the proof that He accomplished all this for us is found in His resurrection.

Well, after that angelic announcement the angels departed back to heaven. The shepherds went and saw, and then they departed back to their sheep. Jesus rose again and departed back to heaven to be at the Father's side. When Christmas dinner is over your friends and family will depart back home. Eventually, the next warm day, perhaps later this week, all the Christmas decorations will be taken down and put back away until next year. And where does that leave you and I? We are left to deal with the stress, the disappointments, and the struggles of our daily life. It's enough to make one wonder, did that promise of joy and peace depart as well?

Our Baptism: Immanuel still with us

Absolutely not. And the proof of that is your baptism. The Savior who came as baby on Christmas morn may have bodily returned to the Father. But He did not depart from your life. His Spirit came to you in your baptism to bring to you the goodness and loving kindness of your Savior Jesus Christ's work of salvation, giving it to you personally. He came to be that daily washing regeneration of faith in your heart and mind. He came to begin that continued work of making you and keeping you right with God through the grace and mercy you have through faith in Jesus Christ.

Jesus came on Christmas morn to be Immanuel, God with us. And through the Holy Spirit working through the means of grace in your life, the continued pronouncement that Gospel Message, that Good News that is for all men, Jesus remains God with Us-God with you, now and for eternity. He is God with you through His word being preached right this moment. He comes to be God with you in the Sacrament of Holy Communion. And through His ever-present Spirit in your life, He remains God with you, even when your friends have gone home, even when the decorations have been taken down, even on the most stressful day of your life. He remains God with you to lift you up, to care for you, to walk with you through any and all troubles.

Sometimes it may seem like He is not there and you are all alone. But know by faith He still comes to you. Simply turn to the places where He promises to be, in His Word and His Sacrament. Jesus promises never to leave you or forsake you. He is God with you now, and with you until His angels call you home. And on the Last day you will be in the presence of Immanuel, God with you, God with us, forever in eternal life.

Conclusion

Looking back to my fearful experience on the road, as I was sliding toward the intersection at Van Slyke and Atherton, I didn't realize at the time I wasn't alone in the car. Immanuel, God with us, was God with me. I can see that now because first off, there were no cars in front of me that I would slide into and rear end. That was God with me. There were no cars turning from Atherton onto Van Slyke that I would run into. That was God with me. And I finally did come to a stop before entering the intersection. And that was God with me.

Jesus, through His Spirit given to us in our baptism remains God with us. And through your faith given in baptism that peace and joy that came on Christmas morning remains with you too. It's not a peace and joy that comes from earthly things like Christmas decorations, gatherings or dinners. It come from Him. It comes from His promise that He has made you His precious child, part of His family. It comes from knowing that while Jesus has ascended to the Father, He has not abandoned you, that He is ruling over all things for your eternal good. He is God with you now, and is at work to make certain that you are with Him and in Him no matter what happens, so that you enjoy the true fulfillment of joy and peace in eternal life. May your faith bring to you that joy and peace into your heart and mind now, and comfort you with whatever you may be going through. Merry Christmas! Amen.