

Written Copy For: Good News of Great Joy Luke 2:10-11,15

Christmas Eve

Tuesday, December 24th, 2019

Text: Luke 2:10-11, 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.

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 Heavenly Father chooses to announce the Good News of Great Joy to all people to shepherds outside the city keeping guard over their flock of sheep. Suddenly an angel of the Lord is present with them along with the glory of the Lord illuminating everything around them. They are terrified enough to want to run away and hide. But the angel reassures them they have no reason to be afraid. He has come to give them good news of great joy concerning the wonderous event that has just happened in Bethlehem. A baby has been born who is the long awaited and promised Savior, the Messiah-the Anointed One-Christ, who is the Lord. This good news of great joy is not just for them, or for the Jews, but for all people. You will know this is who I speak of when you find a baby wrapped up in strips of cloth for protection and comfort who is resting in a feeding trough. Suddenly, a large number of the angelic army appears. They give praise to God saying: "Glory to God in the highest! And peace on earth among men who have His good favor. The angels then departed back into heaven. As they did so the shepherds said to one another "Let us go now and head to Bethlehem to see this promise that has come which the Lord declared to us.

Focus Statement:

God sent His mighty angels to announce the final revelation of His plan of salvation. The one who has been promised that would save the world from sin, death, and the devil. This mighty Saviour had come as an innocent child born to humble parents. Yet cloaked in this child's humanity is the divine presence of the Son of God, who would provide salvation for the whole world. The angels give this event the glorious celebration it is worthy of

Function Statement:

Why it's important to know:

These verses are often portrayed in the Children's Christmas pageants with the younger children who can't handle speaking parts being the angels. It's a very cute scene that doesn't communicate the truth of what took place. What it does is make us overlook the import of the announcement and miss the wonder that is this good news for all people

What the hearer should do as a result:

Ponder the announcement of the Savior's birth in the glorious manner presented to the shepherds. Treasure this good news of great joy that has come to them. Over the holiday season spread the good news as the shepherds did

Subject Sentence: The Gospel announced with great joy for all men

What comes to mind as we hear the Gospel Message describing the angels visit to the shepherds? How is this passage often portrayed? Usually as a part of the Children's Christmas program. We choose the younger children who we dress up in white robes with angel wings attached. They sing "Silent Night" as they do what little kids do: look around, wave at Mom and Dad, spin and dance. And what do we do? We smile and laugh because it really is cute. But if we let that become our image of how the Savior's birth was announced on Christmas, we are missing out on something special and glorious.

So, to get the full effect let's imagine ourselves as one of those shepherds out on the hills near Bethlehem. You are camped out under the stars. There are the sounds that one would normally hear out away from the city: the sheep bleating, small animals rustling, jackals and hyenas howling in the distance. One or two of you would remain awake and at watch for any predators that might try to carry off your sheep. The rest would be dozing; resting until it's your turn to keep watch. It's dark out. There are no lights from the city as we have to help us see at night. They do not have flashlights or Coleman lanterns. A campfire might shed some light in a small limited area, but its light would obscure the night eyes you would need as a shepherd to keep watch over the whole flock.

Then, all of a sudden, you're no longer alone. An angel is now standing in your presence. He wasn't there a minute ago and now he is. And all of a sudden, it's no longer pitch dark out! The glory of the Lord shining out all around you. This is not like a headlamp or a streetlight that partially breaks through the darkness to illuminate a portion of the area, while leaving shadows on the sides facing away from the beaming light. This is the whole area surrounding the shepherds being illuminated just as if the sun suddenly appeared

overhead and was shining down directly on them. There are no shadows. Everything is illuminated. Just this alone would be enough to scare you. But appearing before you is an angel. Not a little adorable child dressed up in a white robe with pretend wings and a halo. Angels are mighty creatures that serve the Lord. They are warriors who fight spiritual battles on behalf of God's people. He stands before you illuminated by the glory of the Lord. He is an imposing figure!

The glory of the Lord that shown around them was not just impressive or scary because of its brightness. The glory of the Lord also is a physical manifestation of God's holiness, His sinlessness. This light shining out not only totally illuminated the earth around the but is shining in on the corrupt nature of your heart. The nature that you inherited from your parents. But also the thoughts, words, and actions that you daily commit that are disobedient and repulsive to the LORD. The glory of the LORD lays bare who you and I really are. When men encounter the glory of the LORD in Scripture their natural reaction is that they are about to die. Sinful man cannot stand in the presence of God's holiness and live. And who would want to stand with all their sinfulness that we try to hide exposed.

But the angel is quick to say: "Stop being afraid! Everything will be alright. I have not come to hurt you. I've been sent to bring you good news of great joy! It is joyful news intended for all people everywhere. Tonight, in the City of David: in Bethlehem, the long-awaited Savior has been born who is Christ, the Lord!"

What exactly did this "Good News" mean to them? What should it mean for us today? It's the birth of the Christ: The Anointed One, or as a good Jew would say: the Messiah.

Normally an anointed one referred to a king who was anointed by having oil poured over

his head to mark him as the earthly ruler of God's people who was to answer to the Heavenly King-God Himself. The Messiah was the one prophesied from long ago. The one who be from the line of David, who would come and restore the kingdom to its former glory. He would save the people from their worst enemies. Now God had used normal men in the past to do extraordinary things in times of oppression. Men whom He raised up from obscurity to lead armies, fight battles, overcome superior forces to save His people from their enemies. But the salvation they provided really came from the hand of the LORD. It was His power and strength working through normal sinful men who won the day by His mighty hand.

But this Savior would be different. This Messiah, this Christ-the Anointed One, was Immanuel: God with us. God truly and really present with His people. God who had come down and become a man, a baby, born of the virgin who was His mother. But the Father was God. This Savior is the Lord Himself come down to live with His people. To fight for His people. To fight a battle that no other man could take on and win: to defeat for all men sin, death, and the devil. Because we are filled with sin from birth, we could never conquer sin our own lives let alone in defeat it in the life of another. But this man, this Savior, this Christ could and would and did. He fought against Satan and won the day for you and for me. He did this not with a sword and shield, but by giving up His own body-His life-the gift He had been given that Christmas night. He took upon Himself the sins of the whole world-your sin and my sin, and through His suffering and dying removed them from us forever. Those sins were debts that we owed God. And in Christ they were paid in full. His resurrection is proof for us that the Father no longer holds them against us. His resurrection stands as the sign of what our future will one day be.

This is the Good News that the angel came to announce. And with that announcement comes the power to believe that it is true. That it is for me, for you. The power of faith engendered in your heart and mine by the Holy Spirit. The faith given in Baptism. The gift that the Gospel-the Good News brings to repentant hearts. The gift that is yours and mine. Christ work on the cross is for you. His resurrection is the promise of your future. And it comes as a free gift to you, the free gift of faith. Free, you can't do enough to earn it for yourself, so this Savior came to earn it for you in His life, death, and resurrection

This Mighty Savior came not looking like a mighty savior at all. He came in the form of a helpless child, born to simple humble parents who couldn't even provide a room to give birth in, but had to place Him in a feeding trough. This baby, who looked on the outside helpless and unable to accomplish all that was set out for Him. God's plan of salvation may have looked unimpressive to the eyes of men that night, but since this baby was actually the mighty hand of God incarnate He would accomplish far more than they could imagine. As the angel told Mary (**Luke 1:32-33**) **"³² He will be a great man and will be called the Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give him the throne of his ancestor David. ³³ Your son will be king of Jacob's people forever, and his kingdom will never end."** And her husband Joseph was to call this baby "Jesus": for He would save His people from their sins. That's who this helpless looking baby is; the one wrapped in strips of cloth and lying in an animal's feeding trough. He is the King of Kings and Lord of Lords. That is the grand and glorious announcement the angel came to give.

And so that these shepherds wouldn't miss the glory and supernatural import of this event all of a sudden, a great assembly of angels appeared. A portion of the angelic army of God.

And they were giving proper praise for this event saying **(Luke 2:14) "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace among those with whom he is pleased!"** Because we don't have within us the ability to give proper praise to the Father for this gift above all other gifts, the angels did it for us. The Holy Lord God Himself has come to dwell among His people. Not to bring judgement upon them, but to establish the peace between God and us that shall never end. What wonderful good news this is!

As the angels departed back into heaven from where they had come, the shepherds stood as changed men. No longer fearful. Instead they wanted to know more. They wanted to go and see this sight for themselves. They wanted to see this baby who was born to save the world. So they dropped everything they were doing, left the sheep where they were, and took off for Bethlehem. They would find Baby Jesus just as the angels had told them. And they would share their story. They would share these extraordinary supernatural events with those they came in contact with. They would share this Good News of Great Joy that had changed their life forever.

What has this Good News of Great Joy done for you in your life? How has it impacted who you are and what your future is? It probably wasn't announced to you by an angelic host with the glory of God surrounding you. It came disguised as something ordinary: the words that I just preached to you about who Jesus is and what He has done for you: that He is your Lord and Savior. But in that message is the Holy Spirit who has all the power and more that was manifested to these shepherds. And whenever you hear it He is there to work change in your heart and life, to give you that powerful free gift of faith, and to confirm and strengthen it.

It's the kind of thing that should make you and I want to rejoice. Want to praise God and sing to Him. To thank Him in prayer for having mercy upon us. To celebrate the gifts that He is about to give us in the Sacrament. And then, as we head out this night, to be on the same mission as the shepherds. To go and tell what you have seen and heard. Go and share this Good News of Great Joy that is for all people. Go share what Christmas is really all about with any and all the LORD gives you opportunity to. Merry Christmas! Amen.