

Sermon Notes

# WORSHIP SERVICE -

## 12.17.2023

# JOY FOR THE WEARY

### Luke 2:8-20

And in the same region there were shepherds out in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night. 9 And an angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were filled with great fear. 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." 16 And they went with haste and found Mary and Joseph, and the baby lying in a manger. 17 And when they saw it, they made known the saying that had been told them concerning this child. 18 And all who heard it wondered at what the shepherds told them. 19 But Mary treasured up all these things, pondering them in her heart. 20 And the shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen, as it had been told them.

## I. THE CONTENT OF THE ANGEL'S MESSAGE

- Luke's gospel records three angelic visitations—Zechariah, Mary, and the Shepherds.
- Matthew records that Joseph received an angelic message in a dream.
- There is a lot of supernatural, angelic activity surrounding the birth of our Lord.
- An angel appears to shepherds who are tending their flock at night and they are afraid.
- Throughout Scripture, angelic visitations have always produced fear and terror.
  
- But we also see that the glory of the Lord shone around them.
- In the OT, the glory of the Lord was the tangible, manifest presence of the thrice holy God.
- Mt. Sinai - Exodus 19 and 20
- The glory of the Lord is not to be trifled with.
- But here, we see the arrival of the angel is accompanied by the glory of the Lord shining around the shepherds.

- These were not priests who needed to appropriately prepare themselves before serving in the temple, these were shepherds.
- They were relieved to hear the very first words out of the angel's mouth.
- *"Fear not, I bring you good news of great joy for all the people!"*
- What's this good news of great joy?
- The good news is that the promised Savior is born on this day.
- That is certainly joyful news to those who were waiting for the Messiah.
- N.T. Wright, *"In the Jewish tradition, joy is something that happens when God finally does something that people have been waiting for."*
- There were times the people of God thought God had forgotten them and his promises.
- Isaiah 49:14 But Zion said, "The Lord has forsaken me; my Lord has forgotten me."
- Galatians 4:4-5 But when the fullness of time had come, God sent forth his Son, born of woman, born under the law, 5 to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as sons.
- Christ was born according to plan, at the right time.
- God does not forget his promises and God does not forget his people.
- Isaiah 49:15-16 "Can a woman forget her nursing child, that she should have no compassion on the son of her womb? Even these may forget, yet I will not forget you. 16 Behold, I have engraved you on the palms of my hands; your walls are continually before me.
- Christ's birth announced by the angel was exactly what they had been waiting on for so long!
- The angel tells the shepherds that the sign of his arrival is that they will find a baby swaddled in a blanket.
- We would expect a newborn infant to be wrapped in a blanket. They should expect a baby.
- But there is a second aspect to this sign, they will find this baby in a blanket lying in a manger.
- The manger was likely the feeding trough for farm animals.
- Christ, the one who is the subject of the angelic proclamation, has been born in the unlikeliest of places.

## II. THE RECIPIENTS OF THE ANGEL'S MESSAGE

- Christ was born in obscurity, in the humblest and unlikeliest of places.
- So, it's not surprising that the recipients of the angelic proclamation would be the unlikeliest of people to receive the revelation of good news of great joy.
- You would think the announcement of the birth of the Savior would have gone to the religious elite—the Chiefs Priest and the Scribes, the Sadducees who made up the ruling body of Israel; they were the influential people in Jewish society.
- But God chose to deliver the good news first to the ears of the small town, Judean shepherds.
- Why is that?
- Let's consider the shepherds.
- Shepherding work was considered a lowly profession for uneducated and unskilled workers.
- They had no social clout and were not considered trustworthy.
- Because of the nature of their work they were ceremonially unclean.
- They were just as despised as tax collectors.

- Shepherds bore the official label of 'sinners'. They were a class of especially despised people.
  - So why entrust this important message to shepherds?
  - First, the Christ, the messiah, was a descendent of David.
  - Second, one of the symbols of how God relates to his people is that of a shepherd to his flock.
  - Psalm 23, this beloved Psalm beautifully depicts God's loving care, protection, and provision for his people.
  - Ezekiel 34:15-16, 23-24 I myself will be the shepherd of my sheep, and I myself will make them lie down, declares the Lord God. 16 I will seek the lost, and I will bring back the strayed, and I will bind up the injured, and I will strengthen the weak, and the fat and the strong I will destroy. I will feed them in justice. 23 And I will set up over them one shepherd, my servant David, and he shall feed them: he shall feed them and be their shepherd. 24 And I, the Lord, will be their God, and my servant David shall be prince among them. I am the Lord; I have spoken.
  - Third, we have a foreshadowing of Jesus who is the Good Shepherd.
  - In John 10, Jesus declares that he is the good shepherd, laying down his life for his sheep.
  - Then he says, "*And I have other sheep that are not of this fold. I must bring them also, and they will listen to my voice. So there will be one flock, one shepherd.*" (John 10:16)
  - That is a fulfillment of Ezekiel's prophecy,
  - Fourth, these are the very people Jesus came to save.
  - Mark 2:17, And when Jesus heard it, he said to them, "Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick. I came not to call the righteous, but sinners."
  - 1 Corinthians 1:26-31 For consider your calling, brothers: not many of you were wise according to worldly standards, not many were powerful, not many were of noble birth. 27 But God chose what is foolish in the world to shame the wise; God chose what is weak in the world to shame the strong; 28 God chose what is low and despised in the world, even things that are not, to bring to nothing things that are, 29 so that no human being might boast in the presence of God. 30 And because of him you are in Christ Jesus, who became to us wisdom from God, righteousness and sanctification and redemption, 31 so that, as it is written, "Let the one who boasts, boast in the Lord."
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- There are other recipients of the angelic proclamation through the testimony of the shepherds and later through the testimony of Jesus and his disciples.
  - That is the Jews, to whom Jesus first came to.
  - They were God's special people. They were the recipients of the promises made to Abraham, Moses and David.
  - Many rejected Christ. They were waiting on Messiah but they didn't like how he came and what he came to do.
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- The Gentiles also received this message. That's everybody else in the world who didn't receive the promises in the first place like the Israelites.
  - Gentiles were considered by Jews to be the true outcasts.
  - Ephesians 2:12 remember that you were at that time separated from Christ, alienated from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world.
  - After the Jews rejected the gospel, the message was taken to the Gentile world.
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- How do you see yourself?
  - Is the gospel good news of great joy to you?
  - Do you see yourself, apart from Christ, as being spiritually bankrupt and in great need?

### III. THE RESPONSE TO THE ANGEL'S MESSAGE

- How are we to respond to the angelic proclamation of joy to the weary world through the birth of the Christ?
- At the announcement of the birth of the Christ, heaven is rejoicing.
- The angelic host are praising God for the birth of the Savior who will bring peace.
  
- The shepherds instantly believe the message and take action.
- They go to seek after what the angel told them and they find things exactly as the angel said.
- They tell everybody the joyful news that the angel had told them.
- They are some of the first to proclaim the gospel.
- And their response was like that of the angelic host, they head back, *“glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen, as it had been told them.”*
  
- How do we respond two thousand years removed from that night?
- We must respond as they did, with praise and worship.
- The story should make us aware of our great spiritual need of salvation and how the birth of Christ means joy for the weary world.
- It reminds us that apart from Christ, we could never know true and lasting joy.
- Apart from the gift of the Son of God, we would remain in our hopeless and lost state.
- God gave us exactly the gift we needed.
- Don't get caught up in the joylessness of our world because we have cause for great joy!
- The only right response for wretched sinners like us, is to fall on our knees in praise and worship to God who sent His Son to be our Savior.

#### APPLICATION AND REFLECTION

In light of today's message....

- What did I learn about the gospel?
- How can I apply what I learned about the gospel to my life?
- With whom can I share the gospel this week?