

THE PROCLAMATION OF THE MESSAGE...TO US!

Here we are—the last Sunday before **Christmas**, 2024! So **how** do you and your family **celebrate** Christmas? I mentioned last week that this is my 8th Christmas **with you**—but it's the 43rd Christmas with **my wife!**

Have we **celebrated** Christmas **the same way** all 43 of those years? No—**not even close**—and my guess is that that is **true for many** of you as well!

When the kids were young—and before some of them were even born—we spent Christmas Eve with **my grandparents**. As my grandparents got up in years, the venue switched to **my Mom's**. After that—due to moving and the kids getting older—we began going to **Louise's Mom's** on Christmas Eve. Eventually, we didn't **go anywhere** and celebrated with our own children at home.

And then **they** got older—and got married—and we began to have “competition” with in-laws as to **how**—and **when and where**—Christmas would be celebrated. And as our children's children got older, they, too, wanted to start their own traditions. And so the **cycle of change** continues!

Rare is the family who can protect their Christmas traditions so closely—and strongly—that they are **never broken!** But even if the way we spend Christmas **changes** throughout the years, the **meaning and message** of Christmas doesn't change, does it?

What is the non-changing **meaning and message** of Christmas? One of the best summary statements is that which the angel of the Lord **spoke to the shepherds** in Luke 2:11 “For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord.”

But...the message of a Savior was not **just for the shepherds**—it is also a message **to us!** We see that in Luke 2. Let's turn there. Please follow along as I read verses 6-14.

Notice again what it says in vs 10: “...Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be **to all people.**” And since the message is to **all people**, it is obviously a message to us—and **for us!**

What are the **particulars**—the details—of the message? And what is the **primary emphasis** of the message? And what does the message **provide** that makes it good news...that brings great joy...to all people? That is what we are going to be looking at this morning.

First, let's consider... **1. The particulars of the message**

What are the particulars—the details—of the message?

A. It is a message from God

That's important to keep in mind, isn't it? Angels are **God's** messengers; they are **God's** servants!

--They don't bring their **own** message—they bring **God's** message!

--They don't do what **they** want to do—they do what **God** wants them to do!

Listen to what Gabriel said to Zacharias—the father of John the Baptist—in Luke 1:19 “And the angel answering said unto him, I am Gabriel, that **stand in the presence of God; and am sent to speak unto thee, and to shew thee these glad tidings.**”

I don't want to spend a lot of time on a proverbial “rabbit trail,” but it is important to remember that at one time angels had “a freedom of choice.” Lucifer—an angel created by God—**chose to rebel** against God and **forever** became God's enemy—sometime **before he tempted** Adam and Eve in the garden of Eden. We also know that some other angels **followed Satan** in this rebellion.

And although the Bible doesn't give us the details, it seems that at that point, **the fate**—and state—of each individual angel was **sealed**. Those that **followed God** continue to follow God—and those who **rebelled against God** continue to rebel against God.

Why do I believe that to be true? Because we have **zero indication** of angels jumping “back and forth” from God's side to Satan's side—or vice versa. They were **given a choice** to side with who they wanted to—God or Satan—but once they **made that choice**, they were **confirmed** in the state that they chose.

Back to the point at hand: The message of the angel—to both the shepherds and us—is a message **from God!**

God is the **Creator** of heaven and earth—and God is the **Controller** of who gets into heaven after we **leave** this earth! So when God the **Creator** of Heaven—and the Judge **who controls** who gets into heaven—sends an angel from heaven with a message **to us**—and has it **recorded for us** in His Word—we better take heed to the message, right?

But...it is not a **message of judgment**, is it? B. It is a message of good news that brings great joy

--“Fear not”—this is not the bad news of judgment—it is “good news!”

--And it is good news that **will bring** joy—not **might** bring joy!

--And it is good news that will bring **great** joy—not just a **little** joy! The word “great” is translated from the Greek word “megas.” You didn’t know when you used the word “mega” you were speaking Greek, did you? Well now you know! “Megas” means “significant in size, importance, or intensity!”

Why does this message bring great joy? One reason is because... C. It is a message for all people

As already stated, it’s not just a message for **the shepherds**. But...it is not a **coincidence** that God sent His message **to shepherds**—the outcasts of society at that time—**first!**

Why do I say that? Because God does things **intentionally**—and I believe He was emphasizing that the good news is for everyone—**no one** is excluded! Regardless of what **others** think of us, God **cares** about us and **loves** us and **wants us to know** that the good news is to each one of us—and for each one of us!

So...the **particulars** of the message—the details of it—are that it is a message of **good news**...that brings **great joy**...and is for **all people**. But why? The “why” is found in... **2. The pinnacle of the message**

The “pinnacle” **is the highest point**...the culmination...the most important aspect of the message. It answers the question: ‘What’s so **good** about the good news that it brings **great joy** to all people?’

And the answer, of course, is in vs 11: “For unto you is born this day in the city of David **a Saviour**, which is Christ the Lord.” So... what’s so good about the good news?

First... A. Because unto us is born a Savior

What should we **ask ourselves** when we see—or hear—the word “Savior”? Saved from **what**, right?

And what we are saved **from** can usually be figured out from the context...and common sense...and the process of elimination. Here’s what I mean.

We know the Savior doesn’t save from **physical** death because there is no **physical danger** referred to in the context. But what about being saved **from enemies**? How do we know “the Savior” isn’t going to rescue God’s people from **Roman rule**? Because delivering God’s people **from Rome** would probably require **death of some Romans**—which would not qualify as “good news...bringing great joy...to **all** people!”

We also know by comparing Scripture with Scripture—like comparing this verse with Mt 1:21—that this **same** child would be called “Jesus” because “He will save His people from their sins” as noted last week. So, the Savior is the One who saves us from the **penalty of our sins**. He came to save us from **spiritual** death—**eternal separation** from God after we die—not from **bodily**, physical death.

And let’s not overlook the fact that since this good news is for **all people**, all people **need a Savior**—not just some!

Not only is it good news because a Savior is born, it is also good news...B. Because the Savior is Christ the Lord “**Christ**” means the Anointed One—the Messiah—the One the Jews were looking for to fulfill OT prophecies.

Which prophecies? Way too many to list them all, but here are three notable ones.

1) According to Gen 3:15, the seed (offspring) of a woman would strike and bruise Satan’s head.

2) According to Isaiah 53:4-6, God’s servant would suffer for the sins of others.

3) And—according to Daniel 9:26—the Messiah would be “cut off”—meaning killed by a violent death!

Did Jesus **fulfill** all those things? **Yes**; He did!

Not only was the Saviour “Christ”—the coming Messiah—He was also “the Lord.”

“**Lord**” comes from the Greek word “kurios.” According to Bible Hub, it is “used to denote someone who possesses authority, control, or power. It is used to refer to God, Jesus Christ, and sometimes human masters.”

So how do we know if it is being used as a term of respect for **a human master**—or if it is being used as a **title for God**? From the context, right?

Since vs 9 refers to “the angel of **the Lord**” and “the glory of **the Lord**” ...and verses 13 and 14 refer to **God**...and verse 15 refers to the message they had just received from “**the Lord**,” it’s pretty safe to say that “Lord” here refers to a title **for God**!

And let’s not overlook a more **obvious reason**: it is connected to “Christ”—a reference to the coming Messiah—that would suffer for their sins! So the baby was no ordinary One—He was the promised Savior!

Let’s not let **our familiarity** with this truth lead us to **take it for granted** and not appreciate it! Last week during our adult Sunday School class, I reminded those that were here about a wonderful song—and a very touching video—from YouTube that I played here at church a couple of years ago. It’s called “How Should a King Come?” The third stanza goes like this:

*On a star-filled night into Bethlehem, rode a weary woman and a worried man.
And the only sound in the cobblestone street, was the shuffle and the ring of their donkey’s feet.
And a King lay hid in a virgin’s womb, and there were no crowds to see Him come.
And at last in a barn in a manger of hay, He came—and God Incarnate lay!*

God Incarnate...God enfleshed...God with us...**came**—not just to lay in a manger—but to die on a cross! **Why?**

John 1:29 “Behold the Lamb of God, which **taketh away the sin** of the world.”

Galatians 3:13 “Christ hath **redeemed us from the curse of the law**, being made a curse for us: for it is written, Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree:”

I Peter 2:24 “Who His own self **bare our sins** in His own body on the tree,”

I Peter 3:18 “For Christ also hath once **suffered for sins, the just for the unjust**, that He might bring us to God,”

The unmistakable truth taught in these verses—and many, many more—is that **God Himself**—in the person of Jesus—came to **die for our sins** and be our Savior. And—as stated earlier—this good news is available “to all people.” “For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord.”

Third, let’s consider... **3. The provisions of the message**

What does the message **provide**; what does it **give us**? The message points us to the Savior—and the Savior saves us from the **future** judgment and punishment for our sins. But what does the message of the Savior give us **now**? Notice what it says in vs 14: “Glory to God in the highest, and on earth” ...

A. Peace

What is peace? Peace is **more than** an absence of battles in our life! In fact, I believe God wants us to have peace in the **midst of the battles** of life! It is a calm... a rest...a tranquility that we can enjoy because we are **right with God**—and free from guilt.

Do **people desire** to be free from guilt—and have a calm, restful spirit? They do, don’t they? They may not recognize that that is their need, but they do acknowledge **something is missing** in their lives—and do all kinds of crazy things to try to find it.

For example, I read an article in the New York Times on December 12th entitled “C.E.O.s Are Tripping”—and it wasn’t referring to them falling down! Here are a couple of excerpts from the article:

“Today, a growing number of business leaders are using psychedelics, according to executives, coaches and researchers I interviewed. We don’t have data on how often they “trip,” but many executives believe that the drugs can infuse their work with some coveted missing ingredient — **calm**, vulnerability, imagination.

They sometimes take psychedelics on fancy retreats, where they lie blindfolded on mattresses while therapists guide them.” So...because they are “stressed out, fed up, creatively blocked, or emotionally worn” they take drugs to “create chaos and disorganization” in their minds—which in turn leads to “out-of-the box” ideas!

Pretty strange logic, if you ask me!

Or how about **Ryan Borgwardt** from Watertown, Wisconsin? **The name** might not be familiar, but **the story** probably is. Ryan recently turned himself in after **faking his death** back in August so he could abandon his wife and three children—and travel to Eastern Europe to meet up with a woman from Uzbekistan!

His plan was quite elaborate. He drove about 50 miles to Green Lake (one of the deepest in Wisconsin), overturned his kayak, dumped his phone in the lake, then paddled to shore with an inflatable boat. He then rode an **electric bike** through the night to Madison (about 70 miles), took a bus to Detroit, then another bus into Canada, then boarded a plane and flew overseas.

Why did he do it? According to the sheriff that interviewed him, “He was just going to try and make things better in his mind, and this was the way it was going to be.”

Did any of this give him peace; did it “make things better in his mind?” Obviously not!

The only way to have freedom from guilt—and true peace—is to be forgiven by God and to live for God. Maybe that’s being too simplistic but there really is no other way!

The good news of the message of the Savior not only provides peace, it also provides...

B. Good will toward men

We see that in the last part of verse 14 “good will toward men.” In what way does God provide “good will” toward us? **Barnes** writes: “The gift of the Saviour is an expression of good-will or love to people.”

Titus 3:4 “But after that the kindness and love of God our Saviour toward man appeared,” God’s **kindness**...and **love**...and **good will** toward mankind is certainly demonstrated **in the gift** of His Son! I John 4:9-10 “In this **was manifested the love of God toward us**, because that God sent His only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through Him. ¹⁰ **Herein is love**, not that we loved God, **but that He loved us**, and sent His Son to be the propitiation [atoning sacrifice] for our sins.”

What are the provisions of the message—besides escaping the future judgment for our sins?

Peace—the restful tranquility of knowing all is well between you and God

And **good will**—a sense of God’s loving favor and kindness to you and for you.

Can you have either of those two things if you **reject the gift** of God’s Son? No; you can’t! They are found only in Christ!

I also want to mention that some commentators suggest that “good will toward men” should be translated a different way. For the sake of time, I’m not going to get into that, but if you have questions along those lines, feel free to talk to me afterwards.

We have the particulars of the message, the pinnacle of the message, the provisions of the message and—lastly—let’s consider... **4. The praise because of the message**

We see that in verse 13 and the first part of vs 14 – “And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God, and saying, Glory to God in the highest...”

Why did the angels burst out in praise to God while announcing the message of the Savior? I’m sure there are more, but here are three reasons:

A. Because the method of salvation was planned by God.

Mankind did not come up with the plan that Jesus should leave heaven and come to earth and live a perfect life and die for our sins and be raised from the dead. That was God’s plan—a plan that was made before He even made earth or man! **Revelation 13:8** refers to “the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world.”

B. Because the method of salvation was **performed** by God.

God **did not give** the plan to mankind—or angels—and say, “This is the plan that I want you to carry out. I want you to **find** a perfect person that **can die as a substitute** for the sins of others.” None would be found, of course, so the angels come back to God and say, “We can’t **find** a perfect person.”

God’s response? “If you can’t find one, then create one!” Angels, of course, couldn’t do that either! I can’t help but wonder at what point the angels learned that **God Himself** would leave heaven to become the sin-bearer! Fun things to think about, but the point I’m making is this: **anything and everything** that was necessary for us to be saved was **done by God**—therefore God rightly deserves the glory and praise!

Lastly, the angels burst out in praise to God...

C. Because the method of salvation **points** to the greatness of God.

--We see the greatness of **power of God** in the miracle performed whereby a virgin b/c pregnant w/o a man

--We see the greatness of the **love of God** in His **willingness to save** us in the first place! He didn’t **have to do that**—He chose to do that because He loved us!

--And we see the greatness of the **holiness of God** as we consider that the only way we could be saved from the penalty of our sin was for **God Himself**—in the person of Jesus—to **suffer our payment** on the cross!

Why did the angels **break out in praise** to God while announcing the message about the Savior being born?

Because the method of salvation was **planned by God**—and God alone—so He deserved the praise! It was also **performed** by God—and God alone—and **pointed to** the greatness of God—and God alone!

But what’s fascinating about the praise of the angels is though they **could say it**—because it’s true; they couldn’t **experience it** because it wasn’t true **for them!**

--Angels don’t know what it is like to **experience guilt**—then be forgiven!

--Angels don’t know what it is like to **have restlessness**—and be given peace!

--And angels don’t know what it is like to have the **fear of death**—then have the joy of life!

But we do—if we’ve received God’s gift of eternal life through His Son—the Savior!

What about you? “For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord.”

Is He yours? Do you have Him? If not, why not receive Him today?

So what decisions would God have us make based on what we have heard?

1. The good news...that brings great joy...and is available to all people is that God came to be the Savior!

Has He saved you? He wants to—but He does not force you to receive Him.

--He wants you to acknowledge your need for Him—and to make room for Him.

--Why not do that today?

2. Second, do you have **peace**? Not just the peace of forgiveness, but a calm, restful spirit regardless of what is going on in your life?

--You can’t have that as a child of God if you are not living your life for God.

God doesn’t bless you with peace if you are living for you! He will only do that if you are living for Him!

3. Third, do you **praise Him**? Are you grateful that you have been forgiven (if you are)...and that you can experience the **joy of forgiveness** because of God’s love—and wisdom—in providing a way for you to **escape judgment**? Oh, how we ought to praise Him if we’ve experienced that joy!