

## THE PROCLAMATION OF THE MESSAGE...**BY US!**

I want to start out this morning by asking some questions. I don't want you to answer them out loud, but I do want you to think about how you would answer them. Here goes:

How is it that people can **hear, read, or even sing** the words found in Luke 2:11 "For unto you is born this day in the city of David **a Saviour**, which is Christ the Lord"—yet never stop to consider whether or not **they need** a Savior?

How can people sing—Christmas after Christmas—"O Come, O Come Emmanuel"—but not think to ask themselves, '**Why** did Emmanuel—God with us—**come to earth?**'

And how is it that many sing, "Joy to the World! The Lord is come! Let earth receive her King! Let ev'ry heart **prepare Him room**"—without once considering whether **they themselves have prepared room** for Christ in their own heart!"

**How** can that be? Why is there **such a disconnect?** May I suggest that **one reason** is because the message that was proclaimed **to us** and **for us** is not being proclaimed enough **by us!**

The shepherds **proclaimed the good news**—and so did the early church! And God's desire for us is to do the same thing! And yet—for the most part—we have not done a very good job at that. So this morning—as we transition from the Christmas season to the new year—we are going to look at the shepherds as **examples** of proclaimers of the good news, then **some reasons** why we should be doing the same.

Please take your Bibles and let's turn again to Luke 2; follow along as I read verses 8-16.

First, let's notice... **1. The revelation of the good news (vss 9-14)**

**What** is "revelation"—besides **the name** of the last book of the Bible?

A "revelation" is "**new** news" that is given to someone; it is **new information** that is revealed to them.

**Who** initially received the news—the revelation—that Christ was born? **The shepherds**, right?

Although I preached last week about the message the shepherds received from the angels, I do want to start off by giving a brief review.

A. It was a message from God

--Notice again vs 9: "And, lo, the angel **of the Lord**..." "**Of the Lord**" means it was **God's** angel; it belonged to Him! And if the angel **belonged** to God, it was **God's** messenger.

--In vs 13, we see that that angel was joined by "a multitude of the **heavenly** host"—meaning more angels—that were from heaven. And in vs 15, it says, "And it came to pass, as **the angels** were gone away from them **into heaven**..."

The angels were God's messengers—from heaven—and the message they proclaimed **was God's message**. Since it was given to them by God, they were revealing that which God wanted the shepherds to know. B. It is a message of good news that brings great joy

We see that in vs 10: "Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy..."

--**Not** news that "perhaps" or "maybe" or "might" bring joy—it **will bring** joy!

--And **not** news that will bring just a **little** joy—it is good news that brings **great** joy!

And... C. It is a message for all people

We see that in the end of vs 10: "...which shall be to **all** people." It was **for** the shepherds—but **not just** the shepherds. The good news is **to each** one of us—and **for each** one of us! No one is excluded; it applies to all!

And it is for **all people** because it is the **need** of all people!

But salvation is not just the **need** of all people—it is the **greatest need** of all people!

**Why?** Because it meets an **eternal** need—not just a **temporary** one!

Let that sink in! Any **good news** that the world has to offer is only good **for this world!** But **God's good** news—the coming of His Son to be our Savior—is the only gift that meets an **eternal need**—and has **eternal benefits!**

--The good news that “McRib” is back at McDonald’s is **only for a limited time**—and is really not all that good of news! (My wife “got after me” for admitting to eating one of them the other day!)

--The good news that you can **get good deals** on Toyotas is **only good until Toyotathon** ends on January 6, 2025—although it may get extended because Jordan Love plays better during Toyotathon!

--And—on a more serious note—even the good news that Ciara Dierking is getting used to her prosthetic arms—and may be able **to stand** someday—is nothing compared to being **eternally saved** from the penalty of sin...and **living with God forever** in heaven some day—and **having a body fashioned** like unto Christ’s glorious body like it says in Philippians 3:21!

No wonder the apostle Paul said regarding Jesus—God’s gift to us—“Thanks be unto God for His unspeakable [indescribable] gift!”

Next, let’s consider... **2. The response of the shepherds to the good news (vss 15-20)**

**How** did the shepherds **respond to** the message of the good news?

A. They were persuaded by what they heard

In other words, they **believed** the message that had been given to them! How do we know? Notice the evidence of their belief in vs 15. It started with...**intention**: “Let us **now go...**”

Does **just intending** to do something prove you are **persuaded** of it? No; it doesn’t! **Agreeing mentally** with the truthfulness of something is not the same as **believing in**—putting your trust in—what is said. **Genuine faith**—the persuasion that something is true—requires **action**, doesn’t it? Believing—in your **head**—that Charles Blondin **can push a person** in a wheelbarrow on a 3-inch cable stretched over Niagara Falls is one thing—but **getting in the wheelbarrow to be the person pushed** across is quite another!

The shepherds displayed more than **intention**, though. They also demonstrated **conviction**: “let us now go... and **see this thing** which **is come** to pass...” There was no wondering. It was **not** ‘Let’s go see **if** this is true;’ instead, ‘Let’s go see this thing **which is come to pass!** This thing has already happened; we will find it to be so!’

Were those just **empty words**? No, they weren’t! **How** do we know? Because **they acted on** their intention and conviction! They put **literal footsteps** to their belief that Christ the Savior was born in the city of David—and, in great haste—they headed for Bethlehem!

They counted on finding “the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger”—just like the angel told them in vs 12! And that is exactly what they found! We see that in vs 16.

Not only were they **persuaded** by what they heard, B. They proclaimed what they experienced

We see that in vs 17. What did the shepherds “make known”? “The saying which was told them concerning this child,” right?

Put your thinking caps on—and **put yourself in the sandals** of the shepherds. You get a message from an angel—about the Savior—and a sign to help you find Him. That angel is joined by a multitude of other angels with a message of “Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men.”

You and your fellow shepherds head to Bethlehem, find Mary and Joseph and the babe, then **hurriedly leave** the three of them—**without saying so much as a single word** to Mary and Joseph!

Do you think **that** is what happened? I sure don’t! I believe **a conversation took place** between the shepherds, Mary, and Joseph. **Why** do I say that? Because of what it says in vs 19: “But Mary kept all these things, and pondered them in her heart.” **What things** did she ponder? Did she **only ponder** what **she already knew**? I don’t think so! Notice what it says in vs 18: “And all they that heard it wondered at those things which were **told them by the shepherds.**”

I picture the shepherds—with great excitement and yet a reverential quietness—finding Mary, Joseph, and the babe—then **sharing with them** the message they had received from the angels. And it is certainly possible—and **quite likely**—that Mary and Joseph **then shared with the shepherds** what the angel had told **each of them** concerning this child!

But even if I'm wrong; even if the **shepherds said nothing** to Mary and Joseph—and Mary and Joseph **said nothing to the shepherds**—the shepherds still had a message about the child that they “made known abroad.” And I believe it was more than just a handful of people the shepherds told because vs 18 says “And **all they** that heard it...”

One more thing before we move on. Were the shepherds **specifically instructed** to share this good news? Not really! You could argue, I suppose, that since the message was “to all people” that they were **supposed** to **share it** with all people. But I don't think the shepherds shared the good news because they got **a subtle hint** to do so. I believe they shared the good news because **they couldn't help** themselves!

Kind of like Peter and John's response when told not to speak anymore about Jesus in Acts 4:20 “For we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard.”

Not only were they persuaded by what they had heard—and proclaimed what they had experienced...

#### C. They praised God for what they had received

Vs 20. “And the shepherds returned, **glorifying and praising God**...” They had heard “a multitude of the heavenly host praising God, and saying, Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men”—and they **were now doing the same** thing! But **why?**

*Shepherds, why this jubilee? Why your joyous strains prolong?*

*Say what may the tidings be, which inspire your heav'nly song?*

Was it **just because** of the message they **heard** from the angels?

**What** does the rest of vs 20 say? They were “...glorifying and praising God for all the things that they had heard and **seen**...” It wasn't **just because** of what they heard—it was because **they saw**—for themselves—“the Saviour, which is Christ the Lord.”

To recap, **they heard** the news about the Savior...and **believed** the news about the Savior...and **sought** the Savior...and **found** the Savior...and **told others** about the Savior...and **praised God** for the Savior!

What about you? You've **heard** the news about the Savior—but do you **believe** the news about Him? Have you **sought** Him—and **found** Him? If so, are you **telling others** about Him—and **praising God** for Him?

If not, why not?

Lastly, let's consider... **3. The reasons for us to proclaim the good news**

**Why** should we **proclaim** the good news? What should our “motivation for proclamation” be? There are a number of reasons; I'm going to share with you five.

#### A. Because it is the desire of Christ

“**Desire**” might actually be too weak of a word; “**demand**” might be more accurate. **Why** do I say that? Because Christ doesn't **merely suggest** that His followers proclaim the good news—He **commands** us to do it!

**Mt 28:19-20** “Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: <sup>20</sup>Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. Amen.”

As mentioned in previous sermons, the word “teach” in verse 19 is in the **imperative**—meaning it is a **command**. And it means to “make disciples of.” But in order to **disciple someone**—in order to help a believer know **what to** believe and **how to** live—they need to **become a believer** first! And in order to become a believer, they need to **hear the gospel**—and receive Christ for themselves!

Simply put, it is **not optional** for believers to share the good news—it is a requirement! The Great Commission is also given—by Jesus—in Mark 16:15; Luke 24:46-48; John 15:16; John 20:21; and Acts 1:8.

What about you? **Are you obeying** this command? If not, ask God to forgive you for your disobedience—and start obeying! It is not okay to continue in a state of disobedience!

### B. Because it is the delight of Christ

The salvation of sinners is why Christ came—and it is that in which He **delights** in.

**Mt 9:36** “But when He saw the multitudes, He was **moved with compassion** on them, because they fainted, and were scattered abroad, as sheep having no shepherd.”

**Mark 2:17** “When Jesus heard it, He saith unto them, They that are whole have no need of the physician, but they that are sick: I came not to call the righteous, **but sinners to repentance.**”

**Luke 15:10** “Likewise, I say unto you, there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth.” **Luke 19:10** “For the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost.”

**II Peter 3:9** “The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some men count slackness; but is **longsuffering to us-ward**, not willing that any should perish, but that **all should come to repentance.**”

What about you? Do you **delight in** what Jesus delights in? If not, ask God to forgive you for your coldness of heart—and ask Him to give you compassion like Jesus has. It is not okay to remain compassionless!

Why should we proclaim the good news of salvation in Christ? Because it is **desired** by Christ—He commands it—but also because it **delights** Him. It is why He came—and it brings joy to Him when sinners repent!

A third reason we should proclaim the good news is... C. Because of our devotion to Christ

Do we love Christ? We certainly should, shouldn't we? Why? Because He first loved us!

**Romans 5:8** “But God commendeth His love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, **Christ died for us.**”

Please take your Bibles and turn to the book of Galatians.

**Look at** what it says at the end of **Galatians 2:20**: “and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who **loved me**, and **gave Himself** for me.”

**Now Galatians 3:13** states “Christ hath **redeemed us** from the curse of the law, being **made a curse** for us...”

--**I Peter 1:19** reminds us that we were redeemed “with the **precious blood** of Christ.”

--**Revelation 1:5** “Unto Him that **loved us**, and washed us from our sins in His own blood,”

There is no doubt that Jesus loves us—He **proved it** by dying for us!

What is the proof that we love Him? **Obedience**, right?

**John 14:15** “If ye love me, **keep** my commandments.”

**John 14:21** “He that hath my commandments, and **keepeth them**, he it is that loveth me...”

Do we **love Christ**? Not as much as we should! How do we **stir our hearts** to love Him more? Confess our sin of not loving Him more—and meditate on His love **for us**! We love Him because **He first** loved us! It is not okay to have a half-hearted love for Christ demonstrated by half-hearted obedience to what He says!

A fourth reason we need to proclaim the good news is... D. Because of the deception of false teachers

Trick question—sort of. How **many** gospels are there? You're in Galatians 3; turn now to Galatians 1.

Please follow along as I read verses 6-9. There is only one true gospel—but there are **other gospels** that people preach. And they are obviously **perversions** of the true gospel! What does God through Paul say about those who preach a false gospel? “Let him be accursed” it says in the end of both vs 8 and 9.

The word is “anathema” and is used to “denote a person or thing that is **set apart for divine wrath or judgment.**” Why would God **pronounce divine judgment** on those who are preaching a false gospel?

Because a **false gospel** doesn't bring **salvation**—it brings condemnation! And those that lead people into **condemnation** will themselves also **be condemned**!

What is a false gospel? **II Peter 2:1** “But there were false prophets also among the people, even as there shall be false teachers among you, who privily shall bring in **damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them**, and bring upon themselves swift destruction.”

False teachers teach a false gospel that **denies the Lord** that bought them.

In other words—according to them—the **payment of Jesus' death for sins** was not enough—even though God said it is enough! So...false teachers teach that to be saved, you need to be baptized...and do good works...and do penance... and pray certain prayers—all of which conflict with Ephesians 2:8-9. “For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: **it is the gift of God: <sup>9</sup> Not of works**, lest any man should boast.”

How do we guard ourselves against the influence of false teachers? First, beware that they are out there! God warns us about them, so we don't get deceived by them! How do we **recognize** them? By **knowing the truth!** Are you studying truth so you can spot error? We need to, don't we?

There is a fifth reason we need to proclaim the good news, and it is...

E. Because of the destiny of those who die without Christ

Matthew 7:22-23 “Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? <sup>23</sup> And then will I profess unto them, **I never knew you: depart from me**, ye that work iniquity.”

**Mt 25:41, 46** “Then shall He [Jesus] say also unto them on the left hand, **Depart from me, ye cursed**, into **everlasting fire**, prepared for the devil and his angels: <sup>46</sup> “And these shall go away into **everlasting punishment...**”

These are Jesus' words—not mine! Do we believe them? We do in our heads—but does that **reality stir us into action?** If not, ask God to forgive you for **your lack of love for the lost**—and ask Him to burden you and embolden you.

Another good thing to do is **memorize verses** like these so you can meditate on them and share them with the lost. You can also read often—perhaps weekly—about the **rich man in hell** in Luke 16.

Another thing that will stir our burden for the lost is to think often about **what Jesus went through** on the cross! We should be convinced about **the reality**—and **horrors**—of hell when we contemplate all Jesus went through to rescue us from it!

A couple of more questions here as we close. As we looked at how the shepherds proclaimed the good news—and reasons we should be motivated to do the same—are you satisfied with where you are at?

**I'm not**; I want to change! I want to grow in **my burden for the lost**—and **my boldness** in talking to the lost!

What about **you**? Are you **satisfied** with where you are at—or do you want to **change**?

In a book entitled “*How People Change*,” authors Timothy Lane and Paul Tripp wrote: “The Christian life is a **state of thankful discontent** or joyful dissatisfaction. That is, I live every day **thankful for the grace** that has changed my life, but I am **not satisfied**. Why not? Because, when I look at myself honestly, I have to admit that I am not all I can be in Christ.”

My prayer is that we will all have a joyful dissatisfaction—and want to change and grow!

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

1. Just like the shepherds, you've **heard** the good news about the Savior—but do you **believe** the news? Have you **sought** Him—and **found** Him? First and foremost, that is what God wants you to do!

2. Second, are you **satisfied with your efforts** to share the good news of salvation?

--If so, **keep doing** what you are doing—and ask God to help you keep doing it!

But if you're **not satisfied**, confess your coldness and complacency to God—and ask Him to burden you...and embolden you!

The question **is not** whether God wants to answer that prayer! The question is, **will we pray?**