

Good Tidings of Great Joy!

Sermon delivered on December 14th, 2014

By: Pastor Greg Hocson

Text: *Luke 2:8-11*

Introduction

I love the Christmas story. It is the greatest story ever told. It's the greatest day of all! It is a glorious day! I love the Christmas story because it is a true story and because it is about the faithfulness of God. It is about the fulfillment of God's promise of the Messiah. But I am afraid, because we hear this story so many times that we lose its glory and wonder.

Throughout the Old Testament, God told His people that a Messiah was coming. In his "Encyclopedia of Biblical Prophecy," J. Barton Payne itemized 127 Messianic predictions involving more than 3,000 Bible verses, with a remarkable 574 verses referring directly to a personal Messiah!

The first promise made regarding the Messiah is found in ...

Genesis 3:15 And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel.

This promise was fulfilled in ...

Galatians 4:4 But when the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law, 5: To redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons.

Christmas story is about fulfillment of the long promised Messiah!

So, my prayer this morning is that, as I bring these messages on the First Advent of Christ, we would not let its familiarity to rob us of its glory and majesty. But rather we will see and learn what God is seeking to teach us in this story. My prayer is that, we would respond in worship and adoration, faithfulness and greater service, greater boldness and passion in spreading the good news.

Let's revisit the first night when Christ was born ...

I - Fear Not

Luke 2:8 And there were in the same country shepherds abiding in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night. 2:9 And, lo, the angel of the Lord came upon them, and the glory of the Lord shone round about them: and they were sore afraid. 2:10 And the angel said unto them, Fear not: ...

The shepherds were sore afraid at the appearance of the angel. The appearance of angels causes people to fear. At least there are four instances in the Christmas story where an angel appeared and the response was the same - fear.

Luke 1:13 But the angel said unto him, Fear not, Zacharias: for thy prayer is heard ; and thy wife Elisabeth shall bear thee a son, and thou shalt call his name John.

Luke 1:30 And the angel said unto her, Fear not, Mary: for thou hast found favour with God.

Matthew 1:20 But while he thought on these things, behold , the angel of the Lord appeared unto him in a dream, saying , Joseph, thou son of David, fear not to take unto thee Mary thy wife: for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Ghost.

Luke 2:10 And the angel said unto them (shepherds), Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. 11: For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord.

Fear is a natural response to divine revelation. Fear is one of the results of the fall. The angel assured there is nothing to fear because he did not come to hurt them but to bring them good news - *"Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings."*

The angel did not come to declare the judgments of the Lord, but announce the blessings from Him who is merciful and loving God. The angel was sent to give the shepherds good news of great joy. There is need to be afraid, the angel appeared not to announce judgment but to announce blessing.

II - Behold

Luke 2:10 And the angel said unto them, Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. 11: For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord.

There is that word again - Behold! It is an old English word:

Bi - thoroughly; hold - take hold

What the angel is about to say is worthy of the shepherd's undivided attention and admiration. What the angel is about to announce will radically change their lives. It is a good news of great joy.

*Hark the herald angels sing
"Glory to the newborn King!
Peace on earth and mercy mild
God and sinners reconciled"*

In a busy and noisy world we need to stop and think and consider. Do not let Internet, TV, music, activities, shopping, and all the trappings of commercialized Christmas, crowd solitude and silence out of your life. Behold, and see the glory and majesty of Christmas story.

III - Good Tidings

Luke 2:10 And the angel said unto them, Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people.

It's time to hear good news. In a world filled with bad news, we need to hear some good news. But research reveals that people love to hear bad news rather than good news. We cannot blame it all on the media for focusing on bad news? Because there is a market for it. Good news does not sell newspapers, bad news does. People want to see and hear bad news and are addicted to it, as a result, many are stressed out. Study shows that the stress level in America is rising.

Someone said, *"If you want to reduce the anxiety in your life stop watching 24 hour news channels and stop listening to talk radio."*

Turn it off. Instead behold the message God wants us to get.

IV - Great Joy

Luke 2:10 And the angel said unto them, Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people.

There are good news that do not bring great joy but this one does!

This good news, if received with faith will bring great joy. The joy it brings is not the the joy that the world gives. It is not found in parties, food, gifts, decorations, drunkenness, bonuses, families and friends, concerts, pot lucks, feasting. It is a joy that does not depend on circumstances. The joy that this world, and the devil offers is small and temporary.

Hebrews 11:24 By faith Moses, when he was come to years, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter; 25: Choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season; 26: Esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt: for he had respect unto the recompence of the reward.

The joy this world and the devil offers is a pleasure for a season. Its a pleasure that is destructive. The joy that the world offers is small. It is trivial. It is temporary. It is for a season. It's destructive.

The joy of Christmas is great joy. It is pure joy. It is unending joy. It is a joy that last forever.

The shepherds, may be poor and lowly and therefore not highly regarded in society but there is good news for them that will give them great joy.

V - To all the people

Luke 2:10 And the angel said unto them, Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people.

This good news is not only for the select few. It is to all the people. It is not just for the rich, for the educated, for the religious, for the morally upright people. It is for all the people. Regardless of religion, race, gender, age, education, position or contribution in the community. This good news is for all.

This good news was meant to give exceeding joy to all people but unfortunately not all receive the news with great joy. For there are people like King Herod was troubled at it. The greater part of the Jewish nation, who when he came to them, received Him not, but rejected Him as the Messiah. The chief priests, Scribes, and Pharisees, though they knew the scripture and heard about the birth of Christ did nothing about it. And when they saw Him, said, this is the Heir, let's kill Him, and seize on the inheritance.

Luke 19:14 But his citizens hated him, and sent a message after him, saying, We will not have this man to reign over us.

But to all that were waiting for Him, and were looking for redemption in Israel; to all sensible sinners rejoiced at His birth, and in His salvation.

To these the incarnation of Christ, with all the benefits resulting from it, is the cause of great joy, when receive with faith.

VI - The Reason for Great joy

2:11 For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord.

This day

It was the day appointed by God, planned by God, promised by God, the long expected and long awaited promised has been fulfilled.

in the city of David

Today, in Bethlehem, when Jerusalem is busy going about their business, preoccupied with Caesar Augustus' decree and in taxes, a child has been born, a son has been given.

2:11 For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord.

The angel announced the birth of a Saviour, which is exactly what we need. What the world needs is not a great teacher, a great economist, a great politician, but a great Saviour. Because man's greatest need is not education, wealth, or health. Our greatest need is forgiveness and deliverance from sin, from its guilt, penalty and power. Man's greatest need is met through the Gospel.

Saviour

He is a complete Saviour. He not only is able to save from Hell. He is able to save you from this present world.

Titus 2:11 For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, 12: Teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world;

Galatians 1:3 Grace be to you and peace from God the Father, and from our Lord Jesus Christ, 4: Who gave himself for our sins, that he might deliver us from this present evil world, according to the will of God and our Father:

Jesus Christ is not only a Saviour who can take us to Heaven when we die but also is able to take Heaven into our hearts and lives while we still live.

We need a Saviour that can save us not only for the future life but also now in this present life.

Christ the Lord

Who is this Saviour? It is none other than Christ the Lord! The long-awaited Messiah who is the Lord. The Anointed One. The Prophet, Priest and King.

VII - Closing thoughts

2:11 For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord.

Unto you is born

It is not just a Saviour has been born but unto you is born today, that is, today, a Saviour had been born for you.

Today, in the city of David, a child has been born for you. Your Saviour, Christ the Lord, was born in David's city.

To all people

Luke 2:10 And the angel said unto them, Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people.

This good tidings of great joy is not only for you, but it is for all people. That first Christmas night, when Christ was born, God had in mind to bless all mankind. This is the message of the angels ...

Luke 2:13 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, good will toward men.

The shepherds got it

Luke 2:17 And when they had seen it, they made known abroad the saying which was told them concerning this child.

When they saw Christ, they repeated what they had been told about this child. They spread the good news about the Messiah.

God wants this message to get to the people, to this community, to your friends and family. How is He going to do that? The shepherds are all dead and gone. He is not sending Gabriel or any other angels to deliver the message. He is sending you and me. He is giving us the privilege to be His messenger. Oh, you don't have to quit your jobs to do that. I don't think the shepherd quit their jobs as shepherds. But returning to their occupation they made known abroad the message about the Saviour. It is up to us to deliver the message.

First things first

Before you can deliver the good tidings of great joy, you must first receive it yourself. Have you receive it by faith? May God grant you eyes to see and ears to hear the message of salvation!