

Good News of Great Joy for Everyone

Luke 2:1-20

Thesis: The coming of Jesus is good news which produces great joy for everyone everywhere, for Jesus comes to us as the Savior, the Christ, and the Lord.

Text: Like 2:1-20

I have really good news today. Christmas is almost here!

I remember how excited I got about Christmas growing up as a child. Christmas was a wonderful season for my family and extended family. I looked forward to Christmas Day when we would open our presents. For weeks, I would go to the Christmas tree and look at the gifts. I scoped out each gift which had my name on it. I would pick up the gifts, hold them, and try to peer through the wrapping paper. I longed for x-ray vision. I looked for places of weakness in the wrapping or taping job, hoping to get a sneak peek. I wondered what other presents in the house were yet to be wrapped. But, I knew the rule. Mom said that if I ever got passed the wrapping paper or found the stash of gifts yet to be wrapped, she would take away all my presents. My curiosity was tempered and trumped by common sense. The risk was too great.

Anticipation for Christmas kept building in the weeks before December 25. On Christmas morning we got up early. It was awesome. Joy to the world!

That's how I remember Christmas growing up as a little child.

I am aware that for some people, Christmas past or present is a difficult or unpleasant time of year. For some, it is reminder of loss. For some, it comes with painful memories. For others, it is a reminder of brokenness: a broken world, broken promises, and broken and dysfunctional families. For some, it is a reminder of lack and limitation. For others, it is a season of loneliness or discouragement.

Whatever you think or feel about Christmas, I want to make a declaration. Christmas is about the coming of Jesus. The coming of Jesus is good news which produces great joy for everyone everywhere, for Jesus comes to us as the Savior, the Christ, and the Lord.

Let's read from the Scripture about the coming of Jesus on that first Christmas day from Luke 2:1-20.

In those days Caesar Augustus issued a decree that a census should be taken of the entire Roman world. 2 (This was the first census that took place while Quirinius was governor of Syria.) 3 And everyone went to his own town to register. 4 So Joseph also went up from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to Judea, to Bethlehem the town of David, because he belonged to the house and line of David. 5 He went there to register with Mary, who was pledged to be married to him and was expecting a child. 6 While they were there, the time came for the baby to be born, 7 and she gave birth to her firstborn, a son. She wrapped him in cloths and placed him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn. 8 And there were shepherds living out in the fields nearby, keeping watch over their flocks at night. 9 An angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. 10 But the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid. I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people. 11 Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is Christ the Lord. 12 This will be a sign to you: You will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger." 13 Suddenly a great the company of the heavenly host appeared with the angel, praising God and saying, 14 "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace to men on whom his favor rests." 15 When the angels had left them and gone into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, "Let's go to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has told us about." 16 So they hurried off and found Mary and Joseph, and the baby, who was lying in the manger. 17 When they had seen him, they spread the word concerning what had been told them about this child, 18 and all who heard it were amazed at what the shepherds said to them. 19 But Mary treasured up all these things and pondered them in her heart. 20 The shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all the things they had heard and seen, which were just as they had been told (Luke 2:1-20).

Our God is the master strategist. The prophetic word from Micah 5:2 declared that the Messiah would be born in Bethlehem. Messiah was the coming king, the one appointed and anointed by God to rule as King David's true heir. Messiah would rule in the power, authority, and wisdom of God.

David had been born in Bethlehem about a thousand years before the birth of Jesus. Joseph and Mary were in Nazareth. God, who superintends over history and moves history according to his purposes, used the decree of a census for all the Roman empire by Caesar Augustus to fulfill prophetic plans. So, Joseph and Mary had to leave Nazareth and go to Bethlehem to be registered for the census because Joseph was of the lineage of King David. What seemed like the whim of an emperor was actually a tool used by God for his redemptive and prophetic purposes.

Mary was Joseph's fiancé, and she was expecting a child. There was no room in the inn, so they stayed in a stable or a barn or on the ground floor of a house where people lived

upstairs. Jesus—the Savior, the Messiah, the Lord—this humble King was born to a humble family in a humble place. Mary wrapped Jesus in cloths and laid him in a feeding trough.

Then, all heaven breaks loose.

An angel appears to a group of humble, lowly shepherds who were living in the fields tending sheep.

An angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. 10 But the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid. I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people. 11 Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is Christ the Lord. 12 This will be a sign to you: You will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger." 13 Suddenly a great the company of the heavenly host appeared with the angel, praising God and saying, 14 "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace to men on whom his favor rests" (Luke 2:9-13).

The angel proclaims the gospel: the birth of Jesus is good news which produces great joy for everyone everywhere, for Jesus comes to us as the Savior, the Christ, and the Lord.

1. **Jesus is the Savior.** Even the name, Jesus, means Yahweh is salvation.
 - a. Jesus has come to save his people from their sins, to take away the sin of the whole world, and to redeem us and to buy us back for God.
 - b. He comes to save us from our enemies, our brokenness, and our shortcoming.
 - c. He comes to save us through the forgiveness of our sins.
2. **Jesus is the Christ.**
 - a. He is the Messiah: the coming king, the one appointed and anointed by God to rule as King David's true heir.
 - b. As Messiah he would rule in the power, authority, and wisdom of God.
 - i. He would rule over the never-ending kingdom of God.
 - ii. *For to us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government will be on his shoulders. And he will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. 7 Of the increase of his government and peace there will be no end. He will reign on David's throne and over his kingdom, establishing and upholding it with justice and righteousness from that time on and forever. The zeal of the LORD Almighty will accomplish this (Isaiah 9:6-7).*
 - c. His kingdom is righteous, peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit (Romans 14:17). God sets things right; God make things whole; and God releases celebration.
3. **Jesus is the Lord.** He is God. He is Master.

- a. "The astonishing announcement... is that this Messiah who has been born as a baby is also the Lord God himself" (ESV Study Bible).
 - b. *The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the One and Only, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth (John 1:14).*
4. **The birth of Jesus means:**
- a. **Incarnation:** God took on flesh and lives with us.
 - b. **New creation:** God is putting heaven and earth together.
 - c. **The kingdom of our God** invades the kingdoms of this world.
 - d. **Peace: An army of heaven gives glory to God and declares peace—**shalom, wholeness, well-being, human flourishing.
5. **The coming of Jesus is good news which produces great joy for everyone everywhere, for Jesus comes to us as the Savior, the Christ, and the Lord.**
- a. Look at the stark contrast between the coming of Jesus that produces joy for everyone everywhere and the work of the devil and the kingdom of darkness. **The work of the enemy results in a world trapped in darkness, in deception, and in the fury of evil.**
 - b. *And there was war in heaven. Michael and his angels fought against the dragon, and the dragon and his angels fought back. 8 But he was not strong enough, and they lost their place in heaven. 9 The great dragon was hurled down--that ancient serpent called the devil, or Satan, **who leads the whole world astray.** He was hurled to the earth, and his angels with him. 10 Then I heard a loud voice in heaven say: "Now have come the salvation and the power and the kingdom of our God, and the authority of his Christ. For the accuser of our brothers, who accuses them before our God day and night, has been hurled down. 11 They overcame him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony; they did not love their lives so much as to shrink from death. 12 Therefore rejoice, you heavens and you who dwell in them! **But woe to the earth and the sea, because the devil has gone down to you! He is filled with fury, because he knows that his time is short"** (Revelation 12:7-12).*
 - c. The devil "comes to steal, kill, and destroy" (John 10:10.)
 - d. Praise God for the coming of Jesus-- our Savior, our Christ, and our Lord.

The shepherds, as well as the Jews of that day, knew what a Savior, a Messiah, and a Lord was to do. In case someone didn't know, the story of the birth of Jesus is told in context of Caesar Augustus. Caesar was the first of the Roman emperors. He ruled from 31 B.C to A.D. 14 (New Commentary on the Whole Bible-- New Testament: Based on the Classic Commentary of Jamieson, Fausset, and Brown). He was the absolute ruler over the Roman Empire.

Augustus was the adopted son of Julius Caesar. He became sole ruler of the Roman world after a bloody civil war in which he overpowered all rival claimants. The last to be destroyed was the famous Mark Antony, who committed suicide not long after his defeat at the battle of Actium in 31 bc. Augustus turned the great Roman republic into an empire, with himself at the head; he proclaimed that he had brought justice and peace to the whole world; and, declaring his dead adoptive father to be divine, styled himself as 'son of god'. Poets wrote songs about the new era that had begun; historians told the long story of Rome's rise to greatness, reaching its climax (obviously) with Augustus himself. Augustus, people said, was the 'saviour' of the world. He was its king, its 'lord'. Increasingly, in the eastern part of his empire, people worshipped him, too, as a god.

Meanwhile, far away, on that same eastern frontier, a boy was born who would within a generation be hailed as 'son of God'; whose followers would speak of him as 'saviour' and 'lord'; whose arrival, they thought, had brought true justice and peace to the world. Jesus never stood before a Roman emperor, but at the climax of Luke's gospel he stood before his representative, the governor Pontius Pilate. Luke certainly has that scene in mind as he tells his tale: how the emperor in Rome decides to take a census of his whole wide domain, and how this census brings Jesus to be born in the town which was linked to king David himself.

But the point Luke is making is clear. The birth of this little boy is the beginning of a confrontation between the kingdom of God—in all its apparent weakness, insignificance and vulnerability—and the kingdoms of the world. Augustus never heard of Jesus of Nazareth. But within a century or so his successors in Rome had not only heard of him; they were taking steps to obliterate his followers. Within just over three centuries the Emperor himself became a Christian. When you see the manger on a card, or in church, don't stop at the crib. See what it's pointing to. It is pointing to the explosive truth that the baby lying there is already being spoken of as the true king of the world. The rest of Luke's story, both in the gospel and, later on, in Acts, will tell how he comes into his kingdom (New Testament for Everyone, NT Wright).

Actions

As we leave here today, let's look at the shepherds and consider responding to this good news of great joy like the shepherds did.

1. **Learn to obey and respond quickly when the Lord speaks to you or guides you.**

- a. *When the angels had left them and gone into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, "Let's go to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has told us about." 16 So they hurried off and found Mary and Joseph, and the baby, who was lying in the manger (Luke 2:15-16).*
 - b. We can all grow in our capacity and willingness to respond to the Lord and to follow his leadership in our lives.
 - c. Obviously, there is a need for us to talk about risking appropriately. But, that is for another message.
- 2. Share with others what you have seen, heard, and experienced with authenticity, passion, and clarity.**
- a. *When they had seen him, they spread the word concerning what had been told them about this child, 18 and all who heard it were amazed at what the shepherds said to them. 19 But Mary treasured up all these things and pondered them in her heart. (Luke 1:17-18).*
 - i. What they shared caused awe and amazement in the lives of the hearers.
 - ii. What they shared confirmed the word of the Lord to Mary and Joseph, and they needed that confirmation.
 - b. When you share, it keeps alive what the Lord is doing in you and it gives the Holy Spirit a chance to speak to others.
- 3. Live a life of giving glory to God and praising the Lord for what he has done, for what he has said, and for what you have seen, heard, and experienced of the Lord.**
- a. *The shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all the things they had heard and seen, which were just as they had been told (Luke 2:20).*
 - b. Let's live with gratitude and worship. May our lives be an aroma of thanks and praise to our God.

Remember: The coming of Jesus is good news which produces great joy for everyone everywhere, for Jesus comes to us as the Savior, the Christ, and the Lord.

Let's pray.