

God's Special Gift To All

SERMON - December 24, Christmas Eve 2020

Golden verse: "Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace to those on whom his favour rests." Luke 2:14

In ancient Israel, a child was considered a very special gift from God. If a couple were expecting a child, their relatives and neighbours surrounded them with much love and care during the pregnancy. When the time was coming that the child would be delivered, the relatives gathered around the house to provide food and support. Often some musicians were hired, and when the good news was proclaimed that the baby was born, the musicians kicked in on the street, right in front of the house, and played music for a long time, and people were rejoicing.

On the first Christmas night, Mary and Joseph were expecting a child, far, far away from their home. None of their relatives, neighbours or friends were there to share with them this precious occasion. They could not find even a quiet guest room in the whole town of Bethlehem, where Mary could deliver her baby. The place where they found their rest was in a sheep barn, outside of Bethlehem, where lambs were born and raised, which later were prepared to be sacrificed on the altar. That was the special place, where Mary gave birth to her son, Jesus. She wrapped him with cloths into which the newborn baby lambs were born, to be protected. Try to picture this inexperienced young mother, Mary, who gave birth to her first son, Jesus, probably without any help. Maybe only the moon provided some light for them. No family members, friends or musicians were there to express their joy. We would say that it was a cold and dark night in Bethlehem. There was silence around Mary, Joseph, and the baby Jesus.

However, we read that there was joy in heaven. The heavenly host knew what had happened that night. They knew what a significant event had taken place when this child came to earth.

Right after the Lord Jesus was born, heaven mingled with earth. The angels left heaven and came to the field of Bethlehem. Heavenly brightness was brought by the heavenly host for those who were in darkness. I am sure it was as exciting as fireworks!

On that night, it was not a human being who shared the good news about a newborn baby, but God's angel. The news was delivered as the first Christmas sermon: *"Do not be afraid. I bring you good news that will cause great joy for all the people. Today in the town of David a Saviour has been born to you; he is the Messiah, the Lord."* Luke 2:10-11

After this proclamation, not just a small group of regular musicians but a great multitude of the heavenly host appeared with the angel, praising God with the first Christmas carol: *"Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace to those on whom his favour rests."* Luke 2:13-14

Heaven was celebrating on earth. Christmas was celebrated for the first time. Christmas means incarnation: God was incarnated. God became a human being to be with us and to draw us closer to Him. This is what we are celebrating tonight. God is not hiding a faceless power. God is with us, one with us, and His glory is shining amongst us. God became a child on earth.

From historians, we know that this happened over 2,000 years ago. It was foretold many times during history. Tonight, we can give thanks for this miracle to God, who in Jesus Christ declared Himself as our Everlasting, Eternal Heavenly Father, who is constantly with us, embracing us with His immeasurable loving care.

Tonight, we thank God for reaching out to us in Jesus Christ, allowing us to find our way back into His glory. Jesus brought heavenly love to us and, because of Him, we all are called children of God. You are a child of God, because on Christmas night the Lord Jesus was born for you. You are loved by the most High. Christmas happened for you and for me, and in this message, you can freely rejoice in endless happiness.

To whom was this first Christmas concert delivered? To the shepherds, who were watching their flocks on the field during the night.

At that time, shepherds were deeply neglected, peripheral people for such a foolish reason. They were so poor that they did not have always enough water to perform the washing ceremonies prescribed by law, and therefore they were considered unclean. For this, they were even deprived of some human rights. For example, a shepherd could not testify in court. It is no coincidence that God first proclaimed the miracle of incarnation to these neglected and stigmatized people. They may have been the first gifted people, receiving the good news of Christmas, and they were the ONLY ones, who were surrounded by angels, and had the great opportunity to listen to an angels' choir on earth. Moreover, they became the first visitors of Jesus' cradle, and they became the first witnesses of Christmas. They were the first who were ministering others, sharing the good news they saw and heard. They heard the good news; they took effort to be convinced and then they shared the good news with others.

Let us rejoice joyfully, embracing the good news. Christmas is all about God coming to earth as a man, so that men on earth might come to God. In rejoicing in the greatness of God, we need to rejoice in His Person. Let us rejoice together, saying: Glory to God in the highest and peace on earth to all of us.

Let's rejoice together, singing:

Joy to the world! The Lord is come; let earth receive her King; let every heart prepare Him room, and heaven and nature sing.

Joy to the world! The Saviour reigns; let men their songs employ; while fields and floods, rocks, hills, and plains repeat the sounding joy.

No more let sins and sorrows grow, nor thorns infest the ground; He comes to make His blessings flow.

Jesus rules the world with truth and grace, and makes the nations prove the glories of His righteousness, and wonders of his love.

The child of Bethlehem, the child of Christmas, reigns up above, and reigns here amongst us. Somebody said: "The message of Christmas is the Christmas story. If it is false, we are doomed.

If it is true, as it must be, it makes everything else in the world all right." Let's rejoice in the grace of God.