

The Best News Ever

Sermon - Christmas Eve 2022

Scripture Reading: Luke 2: 1-19

Golden Verse: *But the angel said to them, "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

1. What Do You See?

A family during the Great Depression was dealing with huge financial problems and were unable to afford anything but the bare necessities. One day, the news came that a circus was coming to the city. The tickets were sold for one dollar, Their little boy came running home, excited and eager, asking for one dollar from his parents. The father regretfully told his boy that he could not provide him with that much money, but if he would go out and work on a few jobs, he might make some money. The dad promised to match what the boy could earn, and he would be able to buy his own ticket for the circus.

The boy worked very hard and, just one day days before the circus came to the city, he had fifty cents. His father matched the amount. He took the money and ran off to buy his circus ticket.

When the circus came to the city, he grabbed his ticket and rushed to the main street, where he stood on the curb as the circus parade went by. With great excitement, he was watching the clowns, elephants, and all of the performers. A clown came dancing over to him and the boy gave his ticket to the clown. He eagerly watched the rest of the parade and then the boy rushed home and told his parents with great excitement that his dream came true. He had been to the circus and what fun he had experienced. The father, surprised that the boy was home already, asked him to describe the circus. The boy told of the parade that went down the main street and of giving his ticket to the clown. The father sadly took his son in his arms and said, "Son, you didn't see the circus; all you saw was just the parade."

That boy reminds me of many people at Christmas time. Today, many people are caught up with the carols, trees, lights, and gifts. They think that they are experiencing what Christmas is all about. But really, all they are doing is seeing the parade and missing the main event: the true joy of Christmas.

My heart's desire is that tonight each of you may know the real joy of Christmas, understanding the source of that joy which was announced by the angel to the shepherds on that first Christmas night 2,000 years ago: *"Do not be afraid; for*

behold, I bring you good news of great joy which shall be for all the people; for today in the city of David there has been born for you a Saviour, who is Christ the Lord” Luke 2:10-11.

The great joy of Christmas comes through receiving God’s gift of the Saviour, Christ the Lord.

It is great to be with family and friends, to enjoy good food, and to feel their love. But I want to point out something totally different, something much-much deeper. I want you to see the true joy of Christmas, which can last in your heart forever. This joy is an everlasting joy which comes to you from God Almighty, who holds your life in His hands. This joy comes from knowing that you are loved with an unconditional love by God who always holds you close to His heart. Tonight, this kind of everlasting joy comes only to the one who here and now personally receives God’s gift, the Saviour, Jesus Christ.

Tonight we will examine why did the angel describe the news about the Saviour as “great joy”.

2. Joy For You And Me

The news about the Saviour brings great joy because it is good news for you and for me.

Shepherds spent all their life in the fields, watching their sheep. Because of this, they did not have opportunities to wash themselves and to participate in church events. They were marked as unclean and sinners and were outcast from their society.

Imagine how frightening the shepherds’ experience would have been. They had been sitting in the dark night, perhaps with only the light of a flickering fire, when suddenly the sky lit up like noontime by the sudden appearance of an angel. It was enough to scare anyone to death.

When the glory of God in His holiness suddenly surrounded the people who lived in the darkness, their only response was great fear.

It is always a fearful thing for a human being to see a manifestation of God and His glory.

I am very concerned that, today in our world or often even in the church, we don’t know anything about the fear of God. I am sadly witnessing that we have pulled God down and made Him out to be an old man who is just tolerant. We like to hear

that God is loving and kind. But often we forget that God is like our parent and, as a good parent, God cannot tolerate our bad behaviour. We all have the tendency to think that God's judgement will deal only with those who committed huge crimes.

These days, we have pulled God down and we have lifted humanity up so that we mistakenly think that most people are basically good. God is right and He cannot tolerate my sin. As a good father He wants to create in me a pure, sinless heart. In order to shape me, He has to face me with my own bad actions and consequences. The Saviour Jesus Christ was sent to me and to you to cover us with forgiveness, grace and love. God wants you and me to appreciate and to embrace the Saviour who came to us on first Christmas night.

The message that the Saviour has been born is the best of all possible news, because it brings the promise of eternal life to those who are accepting Jesus Christ. So, the news that a Saviour has been born who will deliver all who receive Him is truly "*good news of great joy*". Please embrace Him and He will embrace you.

3. True News

The news about the Saviour brings great joy because it is true news.

Good news is only good if it is true.

If I would tell you, "You just inherited a million dollars," and you would say rejoicing: "Really?" I would reply: "No, I am just kidding." Then you would not rejoice. That news is worthless because it's not true.

If the news that Jesus Christ is born as the Saviour is not true, then the Bible is nothing more than just a joke. If Jesus Christ is not OUR SAVIOUR, then this story is just a nice legend. But if it is true news, that Christ Jesus is eternal God and Saviour, then YOU must believe and act upon it.

Luke, who wrote this gospel, wants us to know that this news is true.

In Luke 1:3, he stated that he had investigated all these stories he wrote in the Bible carefully. Most scholars believe that Mary, the mother of our Lord Jesus, was Luke's direct source for the information in the birth narrative. Luke 2:19 reports that Mary "treasured up all these things, pondering them in her heart." First of all, as a woman of integrity who was personally chosen by God and the closest to Jesus, she witnessed this story we heard tonight.

Then, the witness of the shepherds further confirmed the historical accuracy of these events. There was no reason for the shepherds to fabricate a story about

seeing an angel then listening to an angel choir. It is very unlikely that a group of people would hallucinate about the exact same story. In verse 20, it affirms that everything the shepherds saw and heard were shared with Mary and Joseph, and with all those who lived in Bethlehem and surrounding area. Here in the Bible, we find the straightforward reporting of events from the shepherds and Mary as they happened. So, there is no reason to doubt these reliable eyewitness accounts.

The truth of the narrative is further confirmed by the fulfillment of Old Testament prophecies. I would take another two hours to examine in front of those many prophecies which were foretold about Christ the Lord.

Jesus was born in history. He fulfilled prophecies made hundreds of years before His birth. The events surrounding His birth, life, death, resurrection, and ascension are verified by hundreds of reliable eyewitnesses. This is not only a nice story, but a TRUE story.

Jesus Christ is the Saviour who was born in history, the living God in human flesh. If God has so acted in history, then it is really good news. It is not just a legend, but God's loving message to you and to me. So, the news about the Saviour brings great joy because it is good news and it is true news.

I am asking you a favour right now: Put your name in verse 11: *“there has been born for you a Saviour, who is Christ the Lord.”*

“there has been born for PAUL, for a Saviour, who is Christ the Lord.”

4. The Greatest Gift

I read a touching Christmas story about some poor country children who were eagerly awaiting their father's arrival from the city. Every year when he came home for Christmas, he brought with him presents and goodies to eat and a fresh Christmas tree. But this year, the dad had been laid off and there were no presents and, most disappointing, no tree.

The kids still held out hope that their dad would come up with a tree. The dad promised that he would do what he could. He went into the garage and emerged some time later carrying a two-by-four, about five feet tall, with holes drilled on each side. He went down the street to a neighbor whose property was bordered on three sides by a row of evergreen trees. He asked permission to cut some of the branches, which he brought home and inserted into the holes in the two-by-fours, making a “tree”.

He was trying, but this really could not be called a Christmas tree. The kids tried to deal with their disappointment and the little girl who grew up to write the story looked out the window and prayed. Then, there was a knock at the front door. The woman and her son from the property down the street with the trees were standing there with the tallest, most beautifully shaped Christmas tree that the children had ever seen. The woman also kindly presented the children with a number of small presents that meant a lot, since it was all they got that year.

Every day as she was growing up, the woman who wrote down this story saw a gaping hole in the row of evergreen trees around her neighbour's property and she remembered that act of kindness and how God had answered her prayers. (From a story by Irene Lukas, Guideposts, December 1976.)

Now, I want to ask you a question: How would the neighbour have felt if she had cut down her tree for that family and, when she brought it over, the family said, "Oh, thank you, but we can't accept that. We really aren't interested"? And they politely shut the door. Don't you think that the neighbour would rightfully have felt hurt? And by refusing the gift, that family would have missed the great joy of that Christmas. A gift only brings joy if it is received.

How do you think God feels after sacrificing His own Son so that you could have eternal life and be spared from judgment, only to hear you say, "Thank you, but I can't accept that; I'm just not interested"? It doesn't matter how politely you turn down an offer like that. Any refusal of such a sacrificial offer is an insult. Your house, your car, your cottage, your career, and your money may give you superficial happiness, but it won't last. The only way to know the deep, abiding joy God wants you to have is to be reconciled to Him by receiving His gift, the Saviour, who is Christ the Lord. It's the greatest gift you could ever receive, but it only brings great joy if you accept it. Will you accept God's gracious gift to you right now? AMEN