

Advent 2020 Good News

The final Sundays of Advent I want to focus on the announcement the angels made to the shepherds, recorded for us in the gospel of Luke. It was good news. I felt we all needed good news in the face of such a dark time in our nation and world. There is a heaviness of spirit being experienced by many, but gospel means good news. The message of the angels is good news, the birth of Jesus is good news, the coming of the Lord for us is good news! Good news of great joy for all the people, that's what the angel told the shepherds.

We will look at different aspects of this passage over the next two Sundays, but let's read from Luke 2. Let me give credit to John Piper for inspiring parts of this message. **“In those days Caesar Augustus issued a decree that a census should be taken of the entire Roman world. (This was the first census that took place while Quirinius was governor of Syria.) And everyone went to his own town to register. 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. He went there to register with Mary, who was pledged to be married to him and was expecting a child. While they were there, the time came for the baby to be born 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.**

And there were shepherds living out in the fields nearby, keeping watch over their flocks at night. An angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. 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. Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is Christ the Lord. This will be a sign to you: You will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger.’ Suddenly a great company of the heavenly host appeared with the angel, praising God and saying, ‘Glory to God in the highest and on earth peace to men on whom his favor rests.’” Luke 2:1-14

A real baby, a real day, a real town. King James reads, “Unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior which is Christ the Lord.” There is nothing mythical here. This is not some event that happened “once upon a time.” It happened specifically when Quirinius was Governor of Syria. It happened historically in response to a decree from Caesar Augustus. It happened in a real place, Bethlehem. I've been there multiple times. I've seen the shepherd's fields, the caves. It hasn't moved. It's a real place. It was even prophesied by the prophet

Micah 700 years earlier that the Messiah would be born there. **“But you Bethlehem Ephrathah, though you are small among the clans of Judah, out of you will come for me one who will be ruler over Israel, whose origins are from of old, from ancient times.”**

Micah 5:2 A real day and a real place determined by God. Planned by God in his providence. A day planned before the creation of the world and on this day, this night, everything came together at just the right time, to fulfill the word spoken. Paul in Galatians 4 says “But when the fullness of the time came, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman...” It was in the fullness of time, at just the right time, Christ was born. How amazing that God in his providence would work through a wicked Caesar to see to it that God’s word was fulfilled to the letter, to the day. God is still watching over his word to see that it is fulfilled.

Savior, Messiah and Lord. It is the best good news anyone could imagine: a Savior is born. If you’ve ever sinned, you need a Savior. It’s just this simple. All of us have sinned. The bible says **“For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.” Romans 3:23** Earlier in Romans 3 Paul quotes from the psalmist who said, “there is no one righteous, not even one...all have turned away.” We’ve all sinned, we’ve all broken God’s laws and commandments. And the bible says, **“The soul who sins is the one who will die.” Ezekiel 18:20** We’ve all sinned against God and his word and we are all under a death penalty. That means we all need a Savior. Only God can forgive sins and that’s why God in the fullness of time sent his son to be born of a woman. (Jesus said, “The Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sin.”) That’s the good news. “Unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior!” A Savior is born. His very name means to rescue, to deliver, to save. You will call his name Jesus, the angel told Joseph, because he will save his people from their sins! Salvation is born. The rescuer and deliverer has come.

He is Savior and he is Messiah, the promised One. (“Christ” is the Greek equivalent for the Hebrew word for Messiah.) God keeps his word and fulfills his promise by sending the Messiah, the anointed one. He is the long awaited, ultimate and final prophet, priest and King. In Jesus all the promises of God are fulfilled. The bible says **“For no matter how many promises God has made, they are ‘Yes’ in Christ. And so through him the ‘Amen’ is spoken by us to the glory of God.” 2 Corinthians 1:20.** Christ is the yes, the fulfillment to all God’s promises.

He is Savior, He is Messiah and he is Lord. He is not just another baby but he is Lord! Lord over all. Isaiah said **“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. 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.”** Isaiah 9:6-7

Do you understand why the angels said it was good news? On a real day, in a real city, a real baby is born and he is Savior, so he can forgive our sins and take away our guilt, he is Christ and Messiah so he fulfills every promise of God and all of our hopes and he is Lord, so he will defeat and conquer our enemies and will rule and reign forever and ever. Good news!

Only one angel appeared to the shepherds to make this announcement. They were terrified by the appearance of one angel so who knows what happened when “a great company of the heavenly host appeared with the angel...” John Piper wrote, “Evidently one angel can bring the news, but it does not suffice for one angel to respond to the news. The meaning of this news, the ultimate outcome of this news – that demands an army of angels.” “And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host (army) praising God and saying, ‘Glory to God in the highest and on earth peace among those with whom he is pleased!’”

Salvation has come. A Savior is born. He has come to save us from our sin! We ought to rejoice more than the angels because we are the ones being saved. I’m not going to hell. I don’t have to live with the burden of shame and guilt and sin because Jesus the Savior has set me free, forgiven me and poured his grace upon me! Glory to God in the highest!

God’s glory and our peace. The incarnation is the greatest revelation of the glory of God. John’s gospel declares, **“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 The birth of Jesus, His coming, God in the flesh, reveals God’s glory. The writer of Hebrews says **“The Son is the radiance of God’s glory and the exact representation of his being, sustain all things by his powerful word.”** Hebrews 1:3 Paul writes, **“For God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in him and through him to reconcile to himself all things...by making peace through his blood shed on the cross.”** Colossians 1:19-20

The fullness of God's glory is somehow revealed in that manger, in a feeding trough in a little town called Bethlehem, in the incomparable and eternal Son. And through his coming not only is God's glory revealed, but the potential for our peace is provided.

The King James Version reads, "and on earth, peace, good will toward men." Virtually all modern translations agree that is not an accurate translation. NIV reads, "and on earth peace to men on whom his favor rests." The peace he brings has to be received, it isn't just poured out on everyone. It is peace to those who have received Christ as Savior and Lord, who have received his grace and mercy, his favor -- they experience God's peace.

Have you repented of your sins and asked Jesus to be Savior and Lord of your life? There is peace for all who turn to him in repentance and faith! Are you tired of living without that peace? You see, if you want the peace of God to rule in your life, then God must rule in your life. You can't know peace apart from a relationship with God himself! The bible says, **"Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ..." Romans 5:1** Later Paul writes, **"May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in him..." Romans 15:13** Trust in Jesus, ask him to forgive you and cleanse you from sin and you can have peace with God. Through faith in Jesus, our rebellion against God is forgiven, his anger at sin is turned away, he adopts us into his family and we have peace with God!

When we have peace with God, we can have peace with ourselves. **"Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus." Romans 8:1** When you have peace with God, the condemnation and guilt and anxiety and fear and shame is gone. The bible says "If anyone is in Christ then we are a new creation, old things have passed away." We know we have peace with God, we are in a right relationship with God, and now instead of being anxious about everything, we come to God in prayer and the bible says **"And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus." Philippians 4:7**

When we have peace with God and peace with ourselves, we can have peace with others. This comes as a result of the prince of peace living in us. Peace is one aspect of the fruit of the Spirit that is growing in us. Paul writes, **"If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone." Romans 12:18** This is how we live because we have been forgiven, because we have peace with God. The bible says, **"Get rid of all bitterness, rage and anger,**

brawling and slander, along with every form of malice. Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you.” Ephesians 4:31-32

The Savior has come and because we repented and trusted in him, our sins have been forgiven and we have experienced his favor, his blessing, his peace. Now we live in that peace and we extend that forgiveness and that peace to others.

Glory to God in the highest! A savior is born and we are forgiven. Glory to God in the highest, we have peace with God and peace with ourselves and we can live in peace with others.

It's good news of great joy. Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you: he is Christ the Lord! Jesus has come to save us, to bring glory to God and peace to us. Believe the good news. Open your heart and life to Jesus today! Are you ready?

If Jesus isn't the Savior and Lord of your life, if he isn't ruling and reigning in your life, I want to invite you to surrender your heart and life to him today. He has come so you can be saved, so you can know him and know his peace. The bible says if we confess our sins he is faithful and just and will forgive our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness. Admit the truth. Tell him you need him, you need his salvation and ask him to save you today. Let's pray!

If you made Jesus your savior and Lord today, tell someone. Let one of the pastors know. We want to pray with you and encourage you. If you are watching online, reach out to us at cagtulsa.com.

Receive the blessing of the Lord. May the Lord bless you and keep you. May the Lord make his face shine upon you and be gracious to you. The Lord lift up his countenance upon you and give you peace!