

December 7, 2020

Be Not Afraid: There is Good News of Great Joy

Luke 2:8-20

In this time of frustration and hurt and fear and anger you will recall the angel told Mary “do not be afraid”. The heavenly host told the shepherds do not be afraid!!

God’s mercies are new every morning. (Lamentations 3:23) We must choose to live like it!

It is Christmas! God’s message of hope, grace and love.

A virgin would be with child and she would name her baby **Emmanuel**, “**God is with us**.” (Isaiah 7:14).

“Unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called **Wonderful Counsellor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, and Prince of Peace**.” (Isaiah 9:6).

It was God’s time. It was night. Mary having walked 90 pregnant miles was now in the City of David. Here the **Christ**, the **Messiah** (Daniel 9:25), the **Anointed**, the **Bread of Life** was born. (John 6)

That night his father Joseph named him **Jesus** “for he shall save his people from their sins”. (Matthew 1:21) He is called the **Son of the Most High**. (Luke 1:32)

Isaiah wrote that people who walked in darkness would see a great light. (Isaiah 9:2) Does it seem to some of us that we are in a land of darkness? ‘Jesus speaks to us this morning, telling us He is the **Light of the World**. If we follow him we shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life.’ (John 8:12) Do you, this morning, believe Christ is the Light of the World?

We sing of our dear Savior’s birth. The mystery of the Old Testament is no longer a mystery. God in an incredible act of grace and mercy and perfect judgment has declared darkness will no longer reign. The mystery of the ages was answered in this baby boy we call Jesus the Christ. Christ is our hope of glory and the hope of all who believe. (Colossians 1:27)

Jesus' birth changed the trajectory of human history from downward in sin and death to upward and eternal life. God became a man. Jesus' birth changed the trajectory of your life from sin and death to eternity when.

Human history was interrupted and changed by the birth of this baby at a time and in a place. Grace and eternal life are now possible.

Jesus' birth is a miracle. Your rebirth as a believer is a miracle. You are a new creation. (2 Corinthians 5:17)

The gift of Christmas is that there is good news of great joy for all people: a gift from God our Father to each one of us: to every person. It is a gift of good news to all men and women; girls and boys. It is a gift we cannot earn: a gift we do not deserve. Even though this gift is from God it is like any other gift. We have two choices: accept the gift or reject the gift.

As we look towards Christmas we have good news of great joy that we are able to celebrate. All over the world in open celebration, or in quiet hiding places where being a Christian could mean death, the Body of Christ remembers when God became a man so you and I might have everlasting life. His name is Jesus because he saves us.

Christmas is the time of promise; the promise of peace with God, peace within ourselves, peace with others. This great gift from God is peace: a peace which passes all understanding, a peace completely unlike the world's peace. (John 14:27) Be not afraid.

That first Christmas was the beginning of the "Good News" we now call Christianity. "God so loved the world he gave his **only begotten Son**, that whosoever believes in him should not perish, but have ever-lasting life. Indeed, God did not send the Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him." (John 3:16-17)

Over and over in both the Old and New Testaments the message is 'Be not afraid'.

How could our Creator, who is perfect, who is holy, draw us so close we become his children? God's perfect judgment demands a sacrifice for sin. God's perfect mercy provides it. That has been the good news from the beginning.

It is good news of great joy. Christmas is about the **Lamb of God** who takes away the sin of the world. Sin, or evil, or a sin nature, whatever term you use, is the source of our pain and hurt, lies and guilt, destroyed relationships, pride, greed, and abuse and fear. In his death this baby would cover our sin: he would be **Our Atonement**. (John 29:36)

Like people today, Adam and Eve became aware of their sin and fear set in. The depth of their sadness and guilt is not strange for many men and women today. Looking back as they left the garden Adam and Eve asked the same question people ask today. Is there any good news?

Job lost everything but declared good news: “I know that my **Redeemer** lives, and that at the last he will stand upon the earth.” (Job 19:25) In the midst of all Job suffered he is an example of a person who knows there is good news and he did not fear.

And then, about two thousand years ago, somewhere, far to the east of Judea, wise men saw an astronomical event: a star that was out of the ordinary. We can almost hear them talking to one another: is this the good news the prophet Daniel wrote about. Has the one who would destroy sin come?

This morning if you are hungering for good news here it is. If you believe Jesus is Lord and God has raised him from the dead you are saved and God the Holy Spirit abides in you.

This morning, if you are searching and asking if there really is good news it means God the Holy Spirit is touching you. If you are asking ‘does God, who knows all about me, really love me?’ The good news of great joy is yes, God does love you. He is here and yes, he does know all about you.

The Apostle Paul wrote ‘how can people believe unless they hear about Jesus: unless they hear the good news? How will they hear the good news of great joy unless someone tells them? And who will tell them unless they are sent?’ (Romans 10:14-17) You and me, we are the sent ones. We have the good tidings. Christians are to be messengers of hope.

“There were shepherds living in the fields, keeping watch over their flock by night. An angel of the Lord stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. But the angel said to them, ‘Do not be afraid; for see—I am bringing you good news of great joy for all the people: to you is born

this day in the city of David a Savior, who is the **Messiah**, the **Lord**. This will be a sign for you: you will find a child wrapped in bands of cloth and lying in a manger.’ And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host, praising God and saying, ‘Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace among those whom he favors!’” (Luke2:8-14)

The good news of great joy continues from Old Testament people of faith and the Prophets to Joseph, Mary, and the shepherds, and now, to you and me.

It was happening. The good news is here! What a great God we have!! Can we agree with the Palmist declaring “Let everything that breathes praise the **LORD!**” (Psalm 150:6)

Unto us a child is born. God’s peace is on the earth. In his son, Jesus the Christ, God has demonstrated his love for you. In this child, **Our Savior**, the son is given, God’s grace created a new relationship between you and God who created you. Tell others there is good news of great joy. This baby, the **only begotten Son**, (John 1:18) **Son of Man** and **Son of God**, was born of Mary.

God tells us his word will not return empty. It will accomplish his purposes, and it will succeed in the thing for which God sent it. This word, the good news, tells a hurting world God loves all people: be not afraid. (Isaiah 55:6-11)

We are to believe like Joseph and Mary. We are to run like the shepherds to tell others there is good news of great joy. We are to be gift bringers: bringers of the great gift: good news of great joy. Be not afraid. Christ is born. Christ is risen. Christ is here now and knows your heart right now.

Long before Jesus was born the Prophet Isaiah proclaimed the good news. “Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign. Look, the virgin is with child and shall bear a son, and shall name him **Immanuel**. That is God is with us.” (Isaiah 7:14) “A child has been born for us, a son given to us; authority rests upon his shoulders; and he is named **Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father**, and the **Prince of Peace**.” (Isaiah 9:2-6)

Jesus would be born. This child born in Bethlehem is the good news of great joy. This baby Jesus “is the image of the invisible God. He is the firstborn of all creation. He is before all things, and by him all things hold together. He is the head of the body, the church; he is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, so that he might come to have first place in everything. For in him all the fullness of God was

pleased to dwell, and through him God was pleased to reconcile to himself all things, all people, whether on earth or in heaven, by making peace through the blood of his cross.” (Colossians 1:15-20)

As Christmas approaches do you believe that ‘in the beginning was **the Word** and **the Word** was with God, and **the Word** was God? He was in the beginning with God. All things came into being through him, and without him not one thing came into being. What has come into being in him was life, and the life was the light of all people. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness does not overcome it. (John 1:1-5)

The **Word** became flesh. This is the Christmas message. Jesus is in the world he created. To all who receive him, who believe in his name, he gives power to become children of God, born, not of blood or of the will of the flesh or of the will of man, but of God. (John 1:10-13)

The **Word** became flesh and lives among us. (John 1:14) This is good news of great joy. Think about it! Because of this extraordinary event, when God became a baby boy, you can know Jesus better than you will ever know yourself. Things happen, and each day passes, and we change but Jesus does not change. “He is the same yesterday, today and forever.” The good news of great joy does not change. (Hebrews 13:8)

Jesus tells us if he is lifted up he will draw all men, women and children unto himself. This is the season to lift him up. (John 12:32 and 3:14-15)

For more than 2,000 years men, women and children have prayed in Jesus name. For we have an advocate, Jesus Christ the **Righteous** is our **Advocate** with the Father. (1 John 2:1) He is the **Mediator** between God and you and me. (Timothy 2:5)

This baby is **Alpha and Omega**, the **Beginning and the Ending**, who was, and is, and is to come again, **the Almighty**. (Revelation 1:8).

The spirit of the Lord God was upon him, because the Lord has **Anointed** him; this baby was sent to bring good news to the oppressed, to bind up the broken-hearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and release to the prisoners. (Isaiah 61:1)

Jesus called himself the **Good Shepherd**. (John 10:11) Peter called him the **Chief Shepherd**. (1 Peter 5:4)

This baby is the **Christ of God** (Luke 9:20), the **Consolation of Israel** (Luke 2:25) and the **Chief Cornerstone** (Psalm 118:22/Ephesians 2:19-22)

Jesus is the Deliverer: who shall come out of Zion (Romans 11:26), the **Great High Priest** (Hebrews 4:14), the **Head of the Church** (Ephesians 1:22), the **Holy One of God** (Mark 1:24).

Jesus told us **he was before Abraham** and that **he and the Father are one.** (John 8:58)

He is King of the Ages eternal, immortal, invisible, **the only wise God**, to him be honor and glory for ever and ever. (1 Timothy 1:17)

The wise men called him King of the Jews (Matthew 2:2) Paul names him the **blessed and only Potentate, the King of Kings, and Lord of Lords** (1 Timothy 6:15);. Jesus is the **Lamb of God** which taketh away the sin of the world (John 1:29) and he is the **Lion of Judah, the Root of David.** (Revelation 5:5)

Jesus did not say He was the way. He did not say He will be the way. He says **He IS the Way.** Jesus says to you and to me He is **the Way, the Truth, and the Life.** (John 14:6) Because of this baby there is a Way, we can know the Truth and we can have Life eternal.

Jesus said we can know the truth, and the truth will make us free. (John 8:31-32) This truth sets us free from fear. Fear of the unknown, fear about whether God loves us, fear about whether or not we will measure up, fear that we will fail to meet some criteria, fear of what happens when we die, fear of confusing what is right with what is expedient, fear of the knowledge of our own sins, our own shortcomings, our own failures, our own meanness, fear about what to teach our children, fear about what to tell those we love, and fear about tomorrow...it will all fade away. When we are free from fear we are truly free!

The Prophet Jeremiah wrote 'his name shall be called the **Lord of Our Righteousness.**' (Jeremiah 23:6).

Jesus would be a **Man of Sorrows** (Isaiah 53:3) and **The Bright and Morning Star.** (Revelation 22:16). Jesus is **Our Passover.** (1 Corinthians 5:7)

He is the Prince of Life (Acts 3:15) and our **Redeemer** (Job 19:25). Jesus identifies himself as the **Resurrection, and the Life**.

Jesus is the **Son of David**; the **Son of Abraham**. (Matthew 1:1)

He is the **True Light**, which lights every person's darkness (John 1:9) and the **True Vine**. (John 15:1)

This baby would make righteousness, salvation, truth, good news, faith and the word of God real for us. For two thousand years people have prayed in his name: the **Name Above All Names**.

Listen! You can hear the good news. Come! Come joyful and triumphant for Mary has had her baby. Unto you was born in the City of David a baby and Joseph called him Jesus. He is the **Light of the World**. He is **God with us**. He is the **Word made flesh**.

Because God loves us 'the good news of great joy' is do not fear. God wants a relationship with all people based on Truth that is reliable and is genuine.

What an extraordinary thing. God became a man. What an ordinary way to do it, coming as a baby boy. God, as a baby, intersected with human history, with the sinful nature of man and this world. God presented to us good news of great joy: there is now a new choice.

It is the promise of God. Jesus is **Emmanuel, God with us** and Jesus says come.

The gift: a **Redeemer**: a relationship with our God. Do not be afraid for this is good news of great joy: our **Savior** has been born!

In this season we call Christmas let your voice be a voice of good news; a voice of great joy.

Jesus is the **Alpha and Omega** the **Beginning and the End**. Because of God's Promise all things are possible. (Revelation 22:13)

Because of this good news out of you will flow living water. Christ in you the hope of glory. (Colossians 1:17)

Be ready with an answer for those who ask you about the hope you have. (1 Peter 3:15)

Share this great gift: good news of great joy. Do not be afraid!

‘How are they to call on one in whom they have not believed? And how are they to believe in one of whom they have never heard? And how are they to hear without someone to proclaim him? And how are they to proclaim him unless they are sent? As it is written, ‘How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news!’

‘In our hearts we are to sanctify Christ as Lord. We are always to be ready with an answer for anyone asks us of the hope that is in us.’ (1 Peter 3:15)

Like the shepherds we are to tell people. Because of this baby you can be a peacemaker.

We are witnesses. We are living testimonies of the reality of the birth of Jesus. We are messengers of hope. We have a message of good news. As the trajectory of the earth and all people was forever altered that night so the trajectory of every individual life can be altered. Fear not!

This is the greatest story ever told. This is the truth that will bring light in to darkness no matter how horrible the darkness is. This is the promise of our God in his son Jesus our **Savior**. Perfect love casts out fear. (1 John 4:18)

Do you believe? Then speak, praise, be a light in darkness. Tell of the presence of God the father, Jesus the Son and the Holy Spirit.

Remember whose you are. All people will be blessed by this baby. (Genesis 26:4)
Do not be afraid!

PRAYER

O Lord, open our hearts to be renewed with the great news of the birth of Jesus. Fill us with a message of hope and grace and light. You have changed our lives forever. Use us this Christmas season to bring light where there is darkness. We praise the name of our Savior and we thank you in the glorious name of Christ Jesus. Amen