

Angels' Song Luke 2:1 - 14

Grace to you and peace, from God our Father and our Lord Jesus Christ.

If you open your hymnal to page 187, you will see there at the top of the page, that this song is based upon a portion of our text for this evening, specifically the last verse, “Glory to God in the highest, And on earth peace, goodwill toward men!” This verse has been a part of the church’s liturgy for about 1800 years. It may be that the angels sang it that day to the shepherds, or it may have been spoken. It matters not.

Have you ever noted where it takes place in our liturgy? It happens after the absolution, it is a song giving thanks to God for His mercy to grant us forgiveness.

So imagine you are one of the shepherds, living out in the fields, keeping watch over your sheep. The sun has set, it is dark. You are not sitting around a campfire, for the flames ruin your night vision. You need to be able to see to protect the sheep from predators – rustlers, lions, wolves, or something else. But, you are sitting on a hillside which gives you a good vantage point to see the whole flock. Thankfully, you are not alone, there is a group of you on that hillside to defend against enemies.

Suddenly, there is before you an angel of the Lord – no, not hovering in the sky, it is standing there before you. No, this is not some glamorous beauty queen with wings – nor is it something like a small child with wings – it is an angel of the Lord. This is a terrifying spirit with the appearance of a mighty warrior, bathed in the glory of the Lord. This is terrifying! Your first thought is that this might be the end, and you are going to have to answer to God for all your sins – how your mind has wandered lustfully about Jezebel, the time you stole a handful of figs at the market, that you haven’t forgiven Hezekiah. You are so scared it hurts – you are terrified – sore afraid!

But the angel interrupts your thoughts, *Μὴ φοβεῖσθε, ἰδοὺ γὰρ εὐαγγελίζομαι ὑμῖν χαρὰν μεγάλην ἣτις ἔσται παντὶ τῷ λαῷ, ὅτι ἐτέχθη ὑμῖν σήμερον σωτὴρ ὃς ἔστιν χριστὸς κύριος ἐν πόλει Δαβὶδ·* Or maybe you remember it better from the King James? “Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, which is Christ the Lord.”

The angel’s words are God’s Word. God’s Spirit descends upon you as you hear them and your fear is gone. You are at peace in heart and mind. What is more, you understand! God’s Christ is born, the One promised to Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and foretold in the garden would crush Satan’s head. He who would save me from my sins has come. How glorious this is!

“Let us go to Bethlehem, right now, and see this this which has happened that the Lord has made known to us.”

They went and found everything as the angel had told them. And what did they do? They talked to everybody about it. They did not talk about a little baby lying in a manger. Scripture tells us that they made known the statement which had been told them about this Child.” “For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, which is Christ the Lord.”

That, dear friends, is what the shepherds were thinking that night.

You have heard the words of the angel so often, but have you ever thought about them? Have you wondered what they mean?

In Charlie Brown’s Christmas movie, Linus explains what Christmas is all about. He does so by quoting a portion of our text, verses eight through fourteen. What is interesting is what Linus does in that segment.

When you think of Linus, you think of what? His blue blanket that he is always holding – his security blanket. When he recites those verses and gets to the point, where it says, *and the angel said to them, "Fear not,"* he throws his blanket away. The writer and creator of Peanuts is Charles Schulz, an avowed Christian.

Fear not! Throw away your blanket! There is nothing to fear, all is taken care of. The world is screaming by and the world's idea of Christmas is a raging whirlwind. A pastor friend told of how they went to go get a Christmas tree at the lot on Monday, and when he asked how much the tree he liked was, the worker said, "They are all free, we just want to get rid of them."

What is it that has you all uptight tonight? What are you worried about tonight? Someone is sick? Maybe dying? Whether she'll say yes when you pop the question? Whether they will like the gift you purchased for them? Will pastor's sermon go on so long so that the prime rib in the oven will get overcooked?

What is your security blanket? What is it that you cling to when the trials and tribulations of life in this world stare you down? Your 401k, Social Security check, job, husband, wife, cigarettes, booze, something else?

And what is it that brings fear into your life? Do you fear the consequences of your sins? Which sins? You fought with your spouse. You got angry with the kids for no reason. You hollered at your parents and called them idiots under your breath, even though they were right. You cursed at some guy you do not know because he was preoccupied while driving because his wife just died. You refuse to forgive someone because they haven't done enough to make it up to you yet. Or is there some other sin.

You and I are just like those shepherds on the Judean hillside. We are waiting for God's goodness and grace, we want joy and peace, we want to be right with God. And we certainly want to be done with the troubles of this life.

Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, which is Christ the Lord. And this shall be a sign unto you; Ye shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, 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, and on earth peace, good will toward men."

Tonight we rejoice with the angels, singing praises to God, for our sinfulness has an answer that removes fear – it is the Child who was born, wrapped in swaddling clothes, and laid in a manger. There is your Savior! There is God's answer for your sin! That is God's response to your broken relationships, your fear of death, your worries about life in this fallen creation – A Savior who is Christ the Lord!

It is this Child who grows into the One who takes away our sin and death when the wood of the manger becomes the beams of a cross. It is He who rises from the dead and grants us His life and joy which shall never end.

Let us sing every time we gather to unwrap God's gift of Christmas – every time we gather where Christ is wrapped in swaddling clothes and laid in a manger – the swaddling clothes of bread and wine when He feeds us flesh and blood in His holy supper – and laid in the manger of His Word of absolution and proclaimed in the Gospel.

Yes, let us join the angelic host in singing our praise to our Savior God who came in humility to save us on that Silent Night so long ago. "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men." Amen.