

GOOD NEWS, GREAT JOY

"THE ANNOUNCEMENT OF GREAT JOY"

LUKE 2:8-15

This Week's Core Competency

Giving away my faith – I give away my faith to fulfill God's promises. Ephesians 6:19-20, *Pray also for me, that whenever I open my mouth, words may be given me so that I will fearlessly make known the mystery of the gospel, for which I am an ambassador in chains. Pray that I may declare it fearlessly, as I should.*

"I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all people." The true meaning of Christmas is captured in the angel's words to the shepherds. The causal relationship of the "great joy" to the "good news" is made explicit in other translations: "Don't be afraid! I am here with good news for you, *which will bring great joy to all the people*" (GNT); "Do not be afraid. I bring you good news *that will cause great joy for all the people*" (NIV2011). The good news, of course, is that a Savior has been born in Bethlehem, who is Christ the Lord. On the significance of "Christ," "Lord," Jesus' humanity and deity, Steven J. Cole writes:

"He is *the Christ*. Christ is Greek for "anointed one" (the Hebrew is "Messiah"). It means that God the Father sent and anointed Jesus for His mission of salvation. He was anointed as prophet to preach the gospel, as priest to offer sacrifice for sins, and as king to reign. He alone is able to reconcile sinful people to God through His life, His sacrificial death and His resurrection.

Do not be afraid. I bring you good news that will cause great joy for all the people.

– The angel

"He is Christ *the Lord*. The same word is used in Luke 2:9 and 23 to refer to God. The Savior born in Bethlehem is God in human flesh. If He had been only a man, He could not have saved us, because His death would not have had merit beyond Himself. If He had been an angel, He could not have borne human sins. But He was Christ the Lord, God! God alone is great enough to deal with the problem of our sins.

"He is *a man*. He was born in Bethlehem. He did not descend from the sky. He was conceived miraculously in Mary's womb and went through the stages of development just like any human baby. What a wonder! As a man, the representative Man, He could bear the sins of the human race.

"As God in human flesh, Jesus Christ is unique in all the world. He alone qualifies to be the Savior of the world. If you doubt the uniqueness of Jesus, I invite you to read the gospel accounts with the prayer, "God, if Jesus is God in human flesh, reveal that to me and I will believe and obey You." You will discover that He can be nothing other than fully God and fully man united in one person. That makes the news He brings good news of a great joy.

"The angel said that this news was not just for the shepherds, but for "all the people" (2:10). No doubt these Jewish shepherds understood that to mean all the Jewish people. But there is also no doubt that Luke would have his readers know that the good news is for Jew and Gentile alike, for any and all who will call upon the name of the Lord (Rom. 10:11-13)" (<https://bible.org/seriespage/christmas-1999-joy-christmas-luke-210-11>).

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However, good news that goes unproclaimed brings no joy to anyone. How ironic that the good news should be "for all the people," but the realization of that purpose rests with those who have heard and received the good news and been filled with joy. How can others experience the joy that is theirs unless they share the good news—as Paul says, "Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved." How, then, can they call on the one they have not believed in? And how can they believe in the one of whom they have not heard? And how can they hear without someone preaching to them? And how can they preach unless they are sent? As it is written, "How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news!" (Ro 10:13-15).

day 1 ENCOUNTER – read God's word to put yourself in touch with him.

Luke 2:8-15

8 And there were shepherds living out in the fields nearby, keeping watch over their flocks at night. 9 An angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. 10 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. 11 Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is Christ the Lord. 12 This will be a sign to you: You will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger."

13 Suddenly a great company of the heavenly host appeared with the angel, praising God and saying,

14 "Glory to God in the highest,
and on earth peace to men on
whom his favor rests."

15 When the angels had left them and gone into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, "Let's go to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has told us about."

Cf. another translation

8 Now there were shepherds nearby living out in the field, keeping guard over their flock at night. 9 An angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were absolutely terrified. 10 But the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid! Listen carefully, for I proclaim to you good news that brings great joy to all the people: 11 Today your Savior is born in the city of David. He is Christ the Lord. 12 This will be a sign for you: You will find a baby wrapped in strips of cloth and lying in a manger." 13 Suddenly a vast, heavenly army appeared with the angel, praising God and saying,

14 "Glory to God in the highest,
and on earth peace among people with whom he is
pleased!"

15 When the angels left them and went back to heaven, the shepherds said to one another, "Let us go over to Bethlehem and see this thing that has taken place, that the Lord has made known to us." (NET)

EXAMINE – what the passage says before you decide what it means.

- * Underline "in the fields" in v. 8.
- * Circle "glory" in v. 9.
- * Highlight v. 10.
- * Box "but" indicating contrast in vv. 10, 19.
- * Underline "town of David" in v. 11.
- * Circle "Savior," "Christ," and "Lord" used in v. 11 to refer to Jesus.

- * Bracket the sign given in v. 12.
- * Circle "heavenly host" in verse 13.
- * Circle "peace" in v. 14.
- * Bracket "to men on whom his favor rests" in v. 14.

day 2

EXPLORE – the answer to these questions to better understand what the passage means.

Consult the explanation of the message and the notes to follow if you need help.

1. Why send angels to shepherds whom Philip Yancey calls, "illiterate hirelings who watched the flocks of others, 'nobodies' who failed to leave their names" (*The Jesus I Never Knew*, 37).
2. The shepherds were more than afraid; they were "terrified." Explain why.
3. Explain the relationship of the phrase "of great joy" to the "good news."
4. "Town of David" seems like a roundabout way of saying "Bethlehem." Why not just say Bethlehem?
5. The baby is "Christ the Lord." What does that mean?
6. How were the shepherds to recognize the Christ child?
7. What made what the shepherds were told so amazing? (Cf., v. 18).
8. Does verse 14 guarantee worldwide peace on earth? Explain.
9. **Discussion:** Talk about the response of the shepherds and why Luke would preserve them.

EXAMINE – an explanation of the message to better understand the meaning of the passage.

"In [Luke] 2:8-14 we have a third annunciation scene, which follows the same pattern as the previous two [cf., 1:11-20; 26-38]: the appearance of an angel, a response of fear, the command not to fear, the announcement of a birth that brings joy. In this case, however, the announcement is not to a parent of the child to be born, for this birth is not just a family affair. Indeed, the angel stresses that he brings a message of 'great joy which shall be for all the people (2:10)'" (Robert C. Tannehill, *The Narrative Unity of Luke-Acts*, 1:38).

The shepherds got it right that night. The angel appeared to them in the darkness accompanied by the glory of the LORD, a unique blazing brightness that marked the presence of God. Blinded by the light, no wonder they were terrified. What's more, angels were known more for executing judgment than delivering good news, not to mention that it had been centuries since God had spoken directly to any of his people. But that hardly mattered since shepherds would have topped the list of unexpected recipients of such revelation anyway.

The angel said to them, "I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people" (v. 10). The NET Bible clarifies the relationship of the great joy to the good news by translating the verse, "good news that brings great joy to all people." The 2011 edition of the NIV makes the cause/effect relationship of the good news to the great joy even more obvious by translating it, "good news that will cause great joy for all people."

The angel told them that a Savior, Christ the Lord, had been born in "the town of David." Rather than refer to Bethlehem by name, the angel referred to the place of Jesus' birth as "the town of David" (v. 11). He put it that way to connect the birth of the child to David's dynasty. This child was the son of David and heir to the throne of David. On the angel's use of "Savior," "Christ," and "Lord," one commentator explains: "The time had come for the fulfillment of Messiah's predicted coming. A similarly worded birth announcement of Caesar Augustus that archaeologists have discovered shows that such

terminology was not uncommon. However in Jesus' case, it was a cause for true joy. The unusual phrase 'Christ the Lord,' which occurs nowhere else in the New Testament, probably means 'Messiah God.' 'Savior' occurs only here in Luke's Gospel in reference to Jesus" (Thomas L. Constable, "Notes on Luke," 2016 ed., 44, www.soniclight.com). The shepherds are then offered a sign to corroborate the angel's announcement. They will find the baby "wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger" (v. 12), which is clearly how they identified the baby with Mary and Joseph as the one (v. 16).

Then the heavenly host, not of stars but of angels, invited them to join in the chorus and give praise to God. "Glory be to God in heaven, and on earth, peace be to people on whom his favor rests." On the sense of this verse and how it's been translated, one commentator explains: "'Peace' refers here to the fullness of blessing which the Savior/Christ/Lord brings and is essentially a synonym for salvation (cf. Acts 10:36). The latter part of the hymn has been interpreted in several ways: goodwill to men (KJV); to men of good will (Douay); among men with whom he is pleased (RSV). The favor/goodwill referred to in the verse does not belong to men but to God. This is clear from Luke 10:21 (cf. also 1 QH 4:32-33; 11:9), where the Father's good pleasure or favor is referred to, so that it is best to translate this sentence as it is found in the NIV, RSV, NRSV, REB" (Robert H. Stein, *Luke*, NAC, 109).

The words of the heavenly chorus suggest that peace is made available to all people through the Christ child but not all people will obtain it. Only those who receive him like the shepherds will enjoy God's favor. Then, as abruptly as they appeared, the angels returned to heaven and the shepherds set out to find the child.

The Message of the Passage
Praise God and spread the good news—our Savior, Christ the Lord,
has been born in Bethlehem.

day **4** **EMBRACE** – how God spoke to you in his word.

Our desire is to not be merely hearers of the word, but doers of the word as James teaches in James 1:22. Reflect on 3 "living questions" to apply what you have learned this week.

- **Journal your answers to the following *living* questions:**

–How is God making himself known to you?

–How does God want to change you?

–How is God calling you to change your world?

notes **N** STUDY – the commentaries to answer the questions.

v. 8 **shepherds** "In first-century Palestine shepherds did not have the reputation for being overly circumspect with regard to the property of others. They were often held in contempt and considered as nothing more than roving vagabonds and thieves. Whether Luke had this idea in mind is not certain, but if he did, then the lowly shepherds anticipate the blessings many other such persons of low estate will receive from Jesus during his ministry. (If Luke viewed the shepherds as thieves, then ironically we have both Jesus' birth and death in the company of criminals [see Luke 23:32-43])" (Craig A. Evans, *Luke*, NIBC, 36). "These were most unlikely recipients of such a revelation, for shepherds were despised as a class because they were unable to observe the customary laws of ceremonial purification. They were considered unclean. They had not been schooled in the law and therefore were considered ignorant. Such therefore would be unprejudiced witnesses to the birth of Christ" (J. Dwight Pentecost, *The Words and Works of Jesus Christ*, 60).

v. 8 **fields** "December 25 as the celebrated date of Jesus' birth arose around the time of Constantine (ca. a.d. 306-337), though it is mentioned in material from Hippolytus (a.d. 165-235). Some think that the reason for celebration on this date was that it coincided with the pagan Roman festival of Saturnalia, and Christians could celebrate their own festival at this time without fear of persecution. On the basis of the statement that the shepherds were living out in the field, keeping guard over their flock at night it is often suggested that Jesus' birth took place in early spring, since it was only at lambing time that shepherds stood guard over their flocks in the field. This is not absolutely certain, however" (the NET Bible, **sn** 24 on Luke 2:8). In fact, the evidence altogether makes the traditional date more likely (see Harold W. Hoehner, *Chronological Aspects of the Life of Christ*, 25-27).

v. 9 **an angel** Probably Gabriel (cf. 1:19, 26).

v. 9 **glory** This unique blazing brightness is an indication of God's presence. "This was the glory that had appeared to Abraham while he dwelt in Ur (Acts 7:2), the glory that appeared in the tabernacle (Exod. 40:34-35), and the glory that appeared in the temple (1 Kings 8:11). This was the glory that Ezekiel saw depart from the temple (Ezek. 10:4, 18-19; 11:22-23). For more than 500 years the nation Israel had been without that visible sign of God's presence among His people, and now the glory for which Israel had waited was revealed to the shepherds in the field, not to the priest in the temple" (Pentecost, 61).

v. 10 **terrified** Lit., "they feared a great fear" an idiomatic way of intensifying the main idea, fear.

v. 10 **do not be afraid** Lit., "Fear not, for behold, I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people" (ESV).

v. 11 town of David "The title Messiah, which appears here for the first time, should be interpreted in light of what has already been said to Mary and by Zechariah about salvation for the Jewish people through the reestablishment of the Davidic kingdom. The reference to the birth 'in David's city' supports this connection" (Tannehill, 1:38).

v. 11 **Savior, Christ, Lord** Savior "reflects the call of Jesus to deliver his people, as Mary's and Zechariah's hymns declared (cf. 1:46-55, 67-79). 'Christ' (from the Greek word for 'Anointed One') is indicative of his role as the promised Messiah" (Darrell L. Bock, *The NIV Application Commentary: Luke*, 84, 85). "Lord' sometimes translated the divine name Yahweh ('The One Who Is'; see Exod. 3:14) and probably is to be understood in 2:11 in terms of the incarnation; that is to say, the Lord is present in Jesus. This idea is found in early Christianity as is evidenced by the confession 'Jesus is Lord' (1 Cor. 12:3; Rom. 10:9; see Fitzmyer, pp. 200-204)" (Evans, 37; see also his comments on "Savior" and "Christ," 36, 37).

v. 14 **in the highest** Or "in heaven where he dwells." Note the parallelism in v. 14: glory/peace; to God/to men; in the highest/on earth. "Here the 'highest' refers to the highest heavens (cf. 19:38), not to the highest degree" (Robert H. Stein, *Luke*, NAC, 108).

v. 14 **peace** As with the Hebrew term *shalom*, "More than cessation of strife is meant, and the word is used to indicate the full sum of the blessings associated with the coming of the Messiah (Is. 9:5f.; Mi. 5:4). He brings a new situation of peace between God and men in which his blessings can be communicated to them; eirene [peace] is thus tantamount to soteria [salvation] (W. Foerster, *TDNT*, II, 413; Grundmann, 84f.)" (I. Howard Marshall, *The Gospel of Luke*, NIGTC, 112).

v. 14 **favor** "The picture of being a person of God's favor was a Jewish way of saying that someone was numbered among God's chosen people, much like the 'God-fearers' of 1:50-53. This remark makes it clear that salvation and its fullness are not automatic for everyone. Only those who respond to God's grace and follow the path lit by the rising sun will experience the peace into which that path leads (1:78-79). Jesus comes for all, but not all respond to and benefit from his coming" (Bock, 85).

Family Talk

Encouragement from one parent's heart to another

Christmas is less than a week away. I'm trying not to panic as I write that. There is still so much to do. Shopping that needs to be done, plans to be made, food to be cooked, clothes to be washed, pictures to be made and ...whew...I'm already tired. As I read our text for this week, I find myself wondering what life would be like if I were a shepherdess. I'm sure it's a difficult job. I would not likely enjoy long hot days or freezing nights. The smell wouldn't be too pleasant and it might get a little boring just hanging with sheep all day. However, some aspects of the job are appealing. I like the idea of spending time outside on a warm day with a cool breeze on a lovely hillside. The serenity of being separated from the busyness of the urban life would be a nice change of pace. Watching lambs take their first steps and nuzzle their moms would be a sweet moment. The fact that Jesus calls Himself the Good Shepherd is not surprising. I think He likes to linger with us. He enjoys unhurried moments when we are simply abiding with Him with no real agenda except to just be there. I am praying that you and I get those times this week with the Good Shepherd. In the days before Christmas may our families pause and enjoy peaceful moments with the Shepherd.

What Does The Bible Say

Weekly Verse: Read Luke 2:8-15

1. How did the shepherds feel when the angels appeared?
2. What did the angel say first?
3. What great news did the angels give the shepherds?

What Do You Think

The shepherds were speechless when the angels appeared. They had never experienced something like this before. Would you like to have been one of those shepherds that night? How do you think you would have reacted?

What R U Going To Do

I'm not sure how many a "great company" of angels would be but I think it's a lot! Draw a picture of what you think the sky looked like that night.

Core Comp

Giving away my faith - I tell others about Jesus to help with God's work.

Memory Verse

Lk 2:10-11 – *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 Savior has been born to you; he is the Messiah, the Lord."*

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30 CORE COMPETENCIES

10 CORE BELIEFS

Trinity 2 Corinthians 13:14

I believe the God of the Bible is the only true God - Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

Salvation By Grace Ephesians 2:8-9

I believe a person comes into a right relationship with God by His grace, through faith in Jesus Christ.

Authority of the Bible 2 Timothy 3:16-17

I believe the Bible is the Word of God and has the right to command my belief and action.

Personal God Psalm 121:1-2

I believe God is involved in and cares about my daily life.

Identity in Christ John 1:12

I believe I am significant because of my position as a child of God.

Church Ephesians 4:15-16

I believe the church is God's primary way to accomplish His purposes on earth today.

Humanity John 3:16

I believe all people are loved by God and need Jesus Christ as their Savior.

Compassion Psalm 82:3-4

I believe God calls all Christians to show compassion to those in need.

Eternity John 14:1-4

I believe there is a heaven and a hell and that Jesus Christ is returning to judge the earth and to establish His eternal kingdom.

Stewardship 1 Timothy 6:17-19

I believe that everything I am or own belongs to God.

10 CORE PRACTICES

Worship Psalm 95:1-7

I worship God for who He is and what He has done for me.

Prayer Psalm 66:16-20

I pray to God to know Him, to lay my request before Him and to find direction for my daily life.

Bible Study Hebrews 4:12

I read the Bible to know God, the truth, and to find direction for my daily life.

Single-mindedness Matthew 6:33

I focus on God and His priorities for my life.

Spiritual Gifts Romans 12:4-6

I know and use my spiritual gifts to accomplish God's purposes.

Biblical Community Acts 2:44-47

I fellowship with other Christians to accomplish God's purposes in my life, others' lives, and in the world.

Giving Away My Time Colossians 3:17

I give away my time to fulfill God's purposes.

Giving Away My Money

2 Corinthians 8:7

I give away my money to fulfill God's purposes.

Giving Away My Faith Ephesians

6:19-20

I give away my faith to fulfill God's purposes.

Giving Away My Life Romans 12:1

I give away my life to fulfill God's purposes.

10 CORE VIRTUES

Joy John 15:11

I have inner contentment and purpose in spite of my circumstances.

Peace Philippians 4:6-7

I am free from anxiety because things are right between God, myself, and others.

Faithfulness Proverbs 3:3-4

I have established a good name with God and with others based on my long-term loyalty to those relationships.

Self-Control Titus 2:11-13

I have the power, through Christ, to control myself.

Humility Philippians 2:3, 4

I choose to esteem others above myself.

Love 1 John 4:10-12

I sacrificially and unconditionally love and forgive others.

Patience Proverbs 14:29

I take a long time to overheat and endure patiently under the unavoidable pressures of life.

Kindness/Goodness 1 Thess. 5:15

I choose to do the right things in my relationships with others.

Gentleness Philippians 4:5

I am thoughtful, considerate and calm in dealing with others.

Hope Hebrews 6:19-20

I can cope with the hardships of life and with death because of the hope I have in Jesus Christ.

About the Authors

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