

## Expressing Christmas

Luke 2:8-14

If you want to make a big announcement, what do you do?

God is making this big announcement. It's so big and important, he sends it by heavenly messenger. How many of you are still waiting on some Christmas packages to show up? There's nothing like going online and finding the perfect Christmas present only to have it show up late. God's got a message to deliver that's so important he can't trust it to FedEx, UPS, or the Post Office. No. He uses angel-gram. This makes sense.

But who does he make the message to? Like we saw a couple of weeks ago a bunch of lowly shepherds. No mayors, No megastars, no millionaires. No diplomats, no dignitaries, no distinguished persons of any sort.

Maybe it's not the persons that are significant. Perhaps it's the place. Rome. Athens. Jerusalem. Mayberry. Nobody of any importance in any place that matters has any idea what's going on.

So, the angels we get, but the rest of it can be sort of confusing.

But God did it the way he did it, where he did it, with who he did it with for a reason. Let me tell you what Christmas ought to move us to do, if we're believers, and we really believe Jesus, the Son of God, came into this world. If you believe the story of Christmas, if you know what Christmas is really all about, then the angels teach us how we ought to be expressing Christmas. We've looked at the shepherd's, but what about the angels? What can we learn from them?

### I. **Communicate the Good News of Christmas**

Listen to what the angel says to the shepherds in verse 10, "I bring you good news that will cause great joy for all the people."

The first part of the angel's announcement is that it is "good news." In our English Bibles, in the NIV it's five words, "I bring you good news." Those five words come from one Greek word-

*(4 Slides Total)*

*Euangelizomai*. Literally, it means "good news" or "good announcement" or "glad tidings." It is the announcing or the telling of something good or positive.

When this word was first translated into old English it was translated into "godspel" which meant good story. Guess what word that is now. – Gospel – good news. But go back to the original Greek word. Does that look like anything familiar. And let me remind you to pronounce that U like a V. This is also the word from which we get our word *evangelism*.

Some of us when we hear the word *evangelism* break out in the hives. Many Christians have an instinctive, gut churning fear of evangelism. But here's the thing about evangelism. It simply means to share good news.

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Sharing good news should not be hard. Anybody can do it. 10 year olds. 85 year old ladies. Ditch diggers, truck drivers. PHDs can all share good news.

Our problem with evangelism is that we don't think of it as simply sharing good news. We think it's cornering people, pressuring people. We think it's knocking on the doors of strangers or buttonholing a captive audience on a bus or a plane and hitting them over the head with Bible verses. We think it's walking around a college campus with a bullhorn telling everyone they're going to hell. We think evangelism is getting into arguments with people, and winning debates.

That doesn't sound like good news. That doesn't bring great joy to anyone, either the victim or the evangelist. That's why we don't like evangelism. Get in line. I don't like those things either. It makes me break out in a cold sweat.

But this angel says that this is good news that brings great joy. . . for ALL the people.

Most good news doesn't bring great joy to all people. If you were to come up to me and tell me, "Pastor, I'm getting \$10,000 back on my taxes." Is that good news? Can I be honest with you? That's good news, for you, but it doesn't bring me great joy. Oh, sure, I'm happy for you and all, but it doesn't change my world. But if you say, "And I'm giving half of it to the church." Now, that's good news that brings me great joy.

But what if I turn on the news and Ken and Barbie tell me that the government has just passed a new law and everybody's getting \$10,000 back in their taxes, now this is good news on a whole other level. We can all go to Disney world.

What is it about the angel's announcement that makes this good news for everybody? Verse 11 contains the good news, "*Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you.*" A Savior has been born. So, why is that good news, and why is that great joy for everybody? Because in who that baby was, and what that baby brought, and what that baby was going to do, everybody, everywhere, for all time would finally have what everybody, everywhere most truly needs, but never had before.

That need can be expressed in one statement that summarizes the entire message of the entire Bible. If you've never read the Bible, have a hard time understanding the Bible, wonder what it's all about, I'm about to summarize the whole thing in one simple statement. We are all sinners in need of a Savior and that Savior is Jesus.

That's good news for Muslims, Hindus, Jews, Buddhists, Atheists. Agnostics. It's good news for rich and poor and middle class. It's good news for black or white, male or female. It's good news for conservatives and liberals, democrats and Republicans, libertarians and anarchists.

It's the one thing we need, because there is one thing that unites the human race. There is one area where we all stand on equal ground. We're all messed up. We were born defected. We were born infected. We were born imperfected. Romans 3:23 puts it this way, "For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God." We all fall short of what we could be, what we should be, and what God wants us to be. We don't measure up. We are all sinners.

The good news is that Jesus was born on earth for those of us born in sin so that we could be born again and forgiven of our sin. That's good news for everybody. Because not everyone's poor and needs more money. Bill Gates doesn't need more money. Donald Trump doesn't need more money. Not everyone's illiterate and needs more education. PhDs don't need more education. College professors don't have a problem that even more education is going to solve. Not everyone is sick and needs medication. But everybody on planet earth is a sinner and needs a Savior. And that Savior is Jesus. We were all born in sin. We all live in sin, and without a Savior, we will die in sin.

But because of Christmas we can share the good news that we've got a Savior who can deliver us from our sin. There's not a better time of year for those who believe in that baby, who follow that baby, who love that baby, and worship that baby to proclaim the good news to a world full of sinners that needs a Savior that that Savior has come, that Savior has been born, that Savior has died, and that Savior has risen from the dead.

So, if we want to express Christmas like the angels, the first thing we need to do is communicate the good news of Christmas. Secondly, we need to...

## **II. Concentrate on the Great God of Christmas**

The angel's not finished. He's not done. There's more to the announcement. This Jesus is more than just the Savior of the world. He's the heart of the entire mission.

Here's the rest of verse 11, "*Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is the Messiah, the Lord.*"

Jesus is not just the Savior. He is also the Messiah, the Lord. Only place in Bible where these three terms are used together Savior, Messiah, Lord. It's interesting that the angel here doesn't use the proper name Jesus. That was name the angel Gabriel gave to Mary and Joseph. Instead the angel uses three titles. (4 Slides Total ) *Messiah* is the English translation of *Christos*, from which we get *Christ*, which means the *Anointed one*. Christ is not Jesus' last name. It is his title. It is a position.

In ancient times, when someone was crowned king, he was anointed. Jesus is the one who have been crowned king. He is the anointed one. He is the chosen one. What is he king of? Well, that's where the term Lord comes in. It means master, ruler, one who commands. He is lord of all.

The real heart, real message of real Christmas is that Jesus is the Lord of Christmas. Jesus is not special because of Christmas. Christmas is special because of Jesus. Santa Clause is not what makes Christmas special. Rudolph and Frosty and the Grinch and the Elf on the Shelf are not what makes Christmas special. Jesus is what makes Christmas special.

This is the Savior of the world. He is the Messiah, the Christ, the anointed one. He is the Lord of the Universe.

We express Christmas by communicating the good news of Christmas, by concentrating on the great God of Christmas, and thirdly, we express Christmas when we. . .

### III. Celebrate the Glorious Hope of Christmas

The next thing that happens is that God pulls out all the stops. Just the appearance of a single angel is an indescribably experience. Last week we talked about things on our bucket list. Well, just to see one angel in his unveiled glory would top anyone's bucket list.

But this isn't just a singing telegram of one angel. Verse 13 says, *"Suddenly a great company of the heavenly host appeared with the angel praising God and saying."* It's an army of angels. The word for host here means 10,000. We talked a couple of Sundays ago about this powerful scene, so I'm not focus on the visual image here. I want to talk about the angel's message in verse 14,

*"Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace to those on whom his favor rests."*

Typically, we think of the angels signing this. Some might even say this is the first Christmas Carol. It doesn't specifically say that they sang. Although the words for *praise* and *saying* in verse 13, both include the ideas of singing, and *praise* was often accompanied with music and song. And certainly the angel's words are in a poetic style and form. So, I've got no problem with the angels singing this as a song.

Christmas carols are certainly appropriate. If you want a biblical sanction for Christmas music, here you go. However, I don't think they were envisioning songs about red-nosed reindeer, roasting chestnuts or mama kissing Santa Clause. I don't think these angels ever sang "Baby, it's What's important about this, though, is not whether the angels spoke these words or sang them. It's that they celebrated the birth of Jesus and the hope that his birth brought humanity. The focus is not on what the angel's sounded like. It's what they said. It's what they sang. It's the words themselves, because what they promised the human race on planet earth are the two greatest gifts that everyone on the planet needs— peace and favor. Let me explain.

Everyone wants peace on earth. I think every Miss America contestant ever interviewed wishes for peace on Earth. Everyone who's ever run for president promises peace, says they want peace, and will pursue peace. Every dictator who ever oppressed his people or fought with his neighbor says they want peace.

We have been awarding the Nobel Peace Prize for 117 years. We have the United Nations, a global organization dedicated to the pursuit of peace. We have peace protests and peace signs. Everyone from John Lennon, to Bob Marley to U2 sings for peace.

But guess what we still don't have? Peace. The 20<sup>th</sup> Century was the bloodiest in history. All of our advances in science and technology just brought us more and better ways of killing each other. Today we deal with the threats of global terrorism, civil war, ethnic conflict, violent extremism, and mass shootings. From the streets of Paris to the rubble filled cities of Syria to the bloodied classrooms of American Schools, to the concert halls of Paris, London and Las Vegas, peace still eludes us.

What gives? What happened to peace on earth? The peace we're looking for is not the peace the angels were singing about. Peace doesn't mean the absence of trouble.

What these angels were singing about was peace with God. "Peace is not the absence of trouble; peace is the presence of Jesus." True peace only comes from the Prince of Peace through whom God takes our broken pieces and gives us unbroken peace.

We will never find peace among creation until we find peace with our Creator. People are trying to find the peace that money can buy. They are trying to find peace that lying, selfish politicians can negotiate. They're trying to find the peace that comes through the temporary haze of alcohol and drugs. They're trying to find peace by talking out all their troubles on a therapist's couch. But none of those things can bring true lasting peace.

When you finally have peace with God; when you're finally right with God, you know you have the peace of God that will always be with you even when trouble is all around you. You will never have complete peace in this life until you are at complete peace with the one who brought you into this life. Everything else is only temporary. Everything else is only a disguise. The only way to have that peace is to receive it from the Prince of Peace who was born in a manger 2,000 years ago. That's the peace we need.

The second gift mentioned by the angels is Favor. This doesn't mean like doing someone a favor. This is the idea of grace. Grace is often defined as God's unearned favor. It is a gift. You didn't earn it. God doesn't owe it to you. He gives it freely because He is a loving and generous God.

Because of Jesus we have the peace of God and we have the grace of God. There is nothing like going to bed at night and putting your head on the pillow knowing that you are at peace with

God. That if something were to happen to you in the middle of the night, if you were to die in your sleep, it would be okay. You would be more alive than you have ever been before.

And when you get up in the morning whether you're going straight to the office, you're going out to the barn to feed the pigs, or you're going through the drive-thru to get your morning caffeine and sausage and egg biscuit, you have the grace of God on your life. I have the confidence of God's grace. I know I'm right with him. I know his favor rests on me. No matter what anyone else may say, I know He will say, "Well done, my good and faithful servant."

You have those things because of what He's done for you. It's not based on your performance; it's not based on your position; it's not based on your personality; it's all based on Jesus that he came and lived a perfect life and died in your place. He took your place on the cross. He took your place in the grave, and he came back to life so that you can take his place in heaven. That's grace.

There's nothing like going to the store or going to the mall in December. All these people hurrying, scurrying and worrying. So many people are spending money they don't have to buy things for people who don't really want them. Then you've got this angel over here saying you don't need to go to the mall, you don't need to go to Wal-Mart, you don't need to go to Amazon, I got the peace of God and I've got the grace of God, and it's because of who that baby is and what that baby did, and it's all absolutely free. And all you have to do is receive it. That is expressing Christmas.